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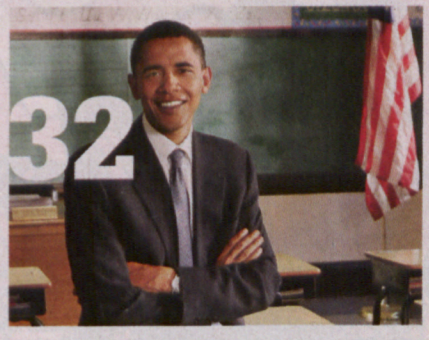

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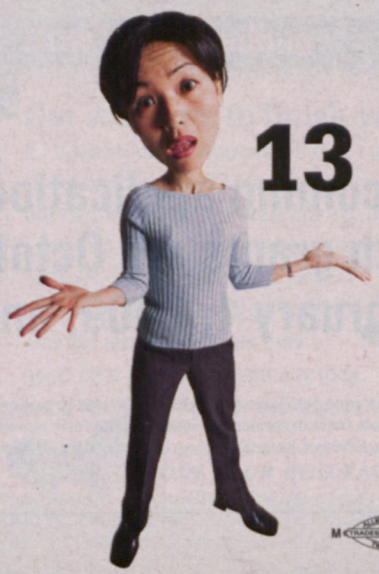

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PHOTOS PAGE 1:
TOP: CORBIS; ILLUSTRATION: MARCI ROTH

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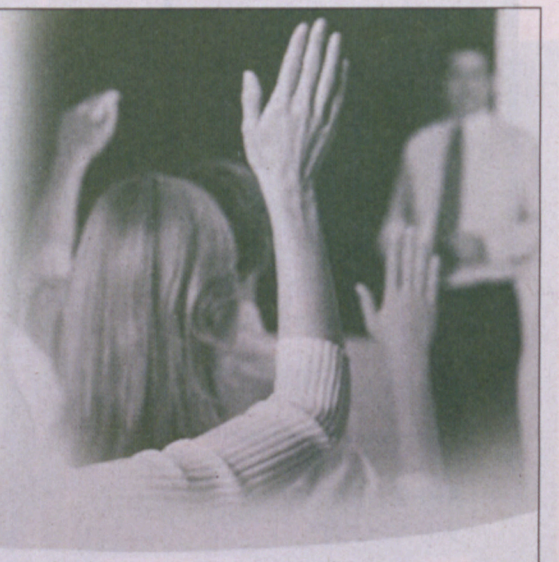
FROM TOP: MEIKO ARQUILLOS; RICK RUNION; JON FEINGERSH
ILLUSTRATION: JIM NUTTLE

IF YOU WANT TO TEACH, LEARN TO REACH.



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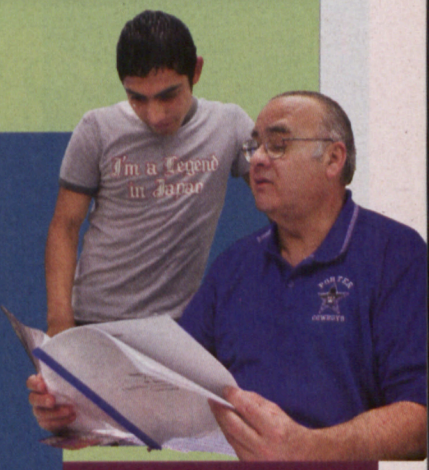
TOP CLICKS



Texas-Mexico Border Town School

Many students in the Brownsville school district can't read or write English. Yet, educators there meet the challenge with flying colors. We take you there in an audio slideshow. **www.nea.org/border**

LAST CALL: Catchy Slogan for NEA's Professional Pay Campaign

Help spread the word that we're worth professional pay. We'll announce the winning slogan in an upcoming issue of *NEA Today*. Deadline for submissions is September 30. **www.nea.org/pay**

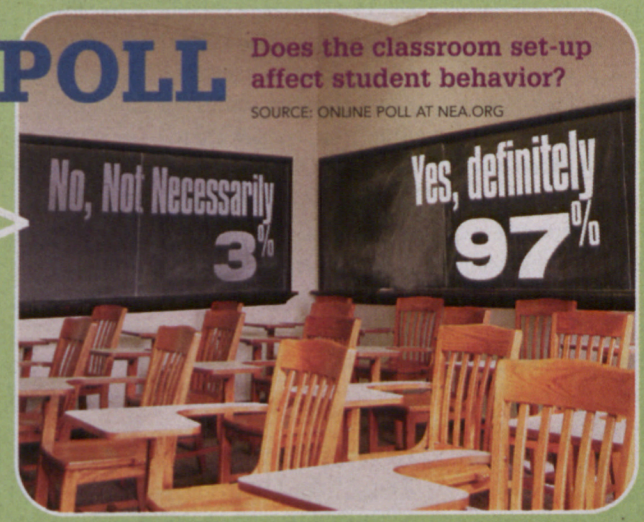
Campaign Season Kicks into High Gear

Get prepped for November. Read the presidential candidates' views on the issues that affect you at **www.nea.org/educationvotes**

POLL

Does the classroom set-up affect student behavior?

SOURCE: ONLINE POLL AT NEA.ORG



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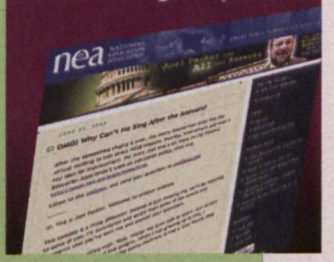
The latest on No Child Left Behind from NEA's top policy expert Joel Packer. **www.nea.org/ref?packer**



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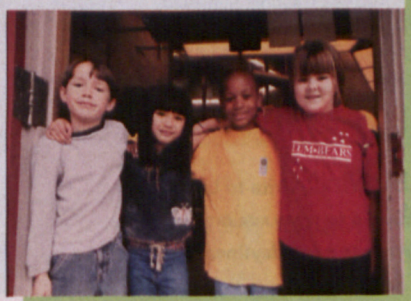

Now you're talking

Get students to finish work

If I have students who are off task I use a sheet broken into 10-minute intervals for the day. If they stay on task for 10 minutes, I star that space. If they earn a certain number of stars they get a prize. I then increase the amount of time and the amount of stars they need little by little. Eventually they don't need the chart or the reward.

Prayer in school?

I'm a retired public school teacher, and I received my education in public schools. At no time did anyone lead us in prayer. We were free to pray silently, which I did frequently, as a student and as a teacher. I do not think public school-sponsored prayer should be allowed. Anyone can pray, silently and unobtrusively, any time they wish.

JOIN YOUR COLLEAGUES IN A DISCUSSION at www.nea.org/forums.

PHOTOS: BROWNSVILLE: GEORGE TULEY; POLL: RYAN MCVAY; STAR: RADEK SMRCKA; CANDLE: MOTOROLKA

Parents Against Cyberbullying

The article "Silencing Cyberbullies" (May 2008) was very informative and helpful regarding what teachers can do to educate students about cyberbullying. But, I found that the article did not speak to how teachers can educate parents as well. After all, these cyberbullies are typically not doing their bullying at school, using school computers and phones. They are conducting themselves at home from their home computers. Parents must be more involved by monitoring the conduct of their children, no matter what their age.

KAREN KUCIEL *Warren, Michigan*

"Silencing Cyberbullies" missed the topic of students using the Internet to slander and malign teachers—using camera phones to take a picture of a teacher and adding a slanderous title, then emailing it to one and all. A teacher's reputation is extremely important and loss of reputation can be cause for dismissal.

BARBARA PUNCHELLO
Morrisville, Pennsylvania

The Power of the Arts

I read "Dance of the Trapezoid" (May 2008) and thought I would add my 2 cents. I teach in a Reading First School so my instructional time for language arts is clearly defined. One of my first grade students was doing very poorly in spelling. She was, however, excellent at the rhythmic clapping rhymes the girls love. One day I challenged her to make up a verse that included spelling out a word and using it appropriately in a sentence. That afternoon she brought a friend to my desk to show me what they had created. She is now getting 100 percent on her tests.

ELAINE LEET
York, Pennsylvania

Compare Japanese students with our children. Japanese children start drawing in kindergarten and art is an integral part of their education all through school. Aren't their test scores much higher? Aren't they considered to be much more focused? Art assists you in being able to hyper-focus. An artist has to focus without distraction on the subject to be able to render it successfully. Art strengthens critical thinking skills, which is something our children need improvement in.

CAROL WASHINGTON
Houston, Texas

Remember National Teacher Day

As an educator, I find myself so invested and involved in my classroom and students that other details often slip my mind. After noting the reminder that National Teacher's Day was coming in the May issue, the date quickly got filed away and forgotten. So, it was a pleasant surprise when my mother—a kindergarten teacher—called on May 6 to wish me a happy National Teacher Day. Many teachers go un-honored and un-thanked on the first Tuesday of May each year. As professional educators, we cannot forget or belittle the other educators around us.

HEATHER NYSTROM
Red Wing, Minnesota

Male Teacher Shortage

I read with interest your article "New Arenas for Title IX" (Upfront, May 2008) Then I turned the page and read "It Matters If You're Male." I couldn't help but wonder why you would encourage your readers to "tackle the obstacles that keep women out of technical fields" when there are so many glaring obstacles keeping men out of education. I support the advancement of all people. But if it comes to focusing on one group, I believe you should focus on the one NEA represents. It's time to tackle the obstacles that are keeping men out of educational fields.

CHRIS NOBLE
Springfield, Oregon

NEA Today (ISSN 0734-7219) is published six times a year in September, October, November, January/February, March/April, and May by the National Education Association, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036-3290.

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *NEA Today*, Attn: NEA Financial & Membership Services Address Change, Suite 420, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: (202) 822-7065.

NEA Today is mailed to all NEA members as a benefit of membership. Nonmember subscription prices: $65 for institution subscriptions; $100 for individual domestic and foreign subscriptions. For members, subscriptions represent $4.55 of annual dues.

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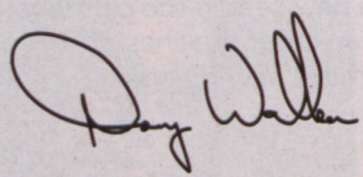
editor's note

LOOKING AHEAD

Some predictions are easier to make than others. ¶ Former New York Mets manager Casey Stengel was once asked about the future prospects for a pair of 20-year-old players. "In 10 years, Ed Kranepool has a chance to be a star," Stengel replied, adding "in 10 years, the other guy has a chance to be 30." ¶ Our cover story this month looks ahead at what the new school year may have in store for practitioners of the profession. We explore education issues, as well as matters that affect you outside of school hours—and no discussion of extracurricular subjects would be complete without a look at the crucial fall elections. ¶ Also in this issue, we hope to help you extend your future with tips on healthy living; you'll meet the new NEA leadership team; and some of your colleagues, in their own words, consider how their students may remember them in years to come. ¶ And whatever the future holds, all of us wish you the very best possible 2008–09 school year.



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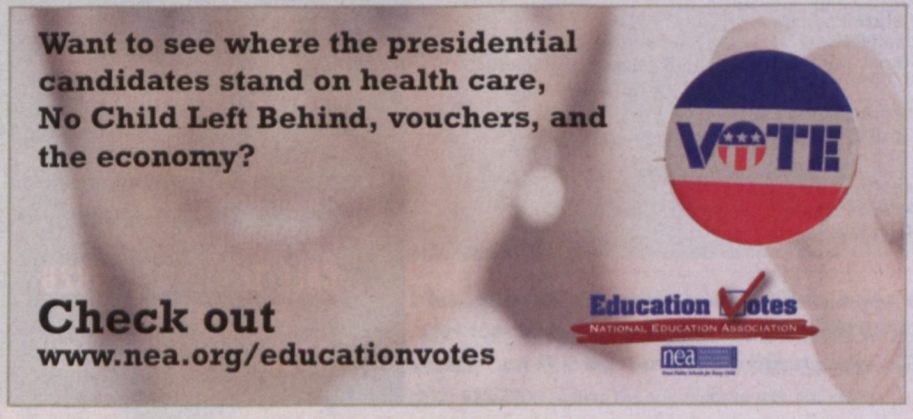
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THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

We, the members of the National Education Association of the United States, are the voice of education professionals. Our work is fundamental to the nation, and we accept the profound trust placed in us.

OUR VISION

Our vision is a great public school for every student.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to advocate for education professionals and to unite our members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world.

OUR CORE VALUES

These principles guide our work and define our mission:

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY. We believe public education is the gateway to opportunity. All students have the human and civil right to a quality public education that develops their potential, independence, and character.

A JUST SOCIETY. We believe public education is vital to building respect for the worth, dignity, and equality of every individual in our diverse society.

DEMOCRACY. We believe public education is the cornerstone of our republic. Public education provides individuals with the skills to be involved, informed, and engaged in our representative democracy.

PROFESSIONALISM. We believe that the expertise and judgment of education professionals are critical to student success. We maintain the highest professional standards, and we expect the status, compensation, and respect due all professionals.

PARTNERSHIP. We believe partnerships with parents, families, communities, and other stakeholders are essential to quality public education and student success.

COLLECTIVE ACTION. We believe individuals are strengthened when they work together for the common good. As education professionals, we improve both our professional status and the quality of public education when we unite and advocate collectively.

WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN

There's a certain energy and hopeful anticipation about a new school year. It's almost like a feeling of renewal or rebirth. This is a golden time: all the students—and their parents—eagerly awaiting a fresh start.

Every year all of us have a hunger to help make our lives better: for our students, for our profession, and for public education. Through your local Association, you will show members how to be effective activists. You will show them the leadership skills they always had, but were temporarily lying dormant. As a teacher I knew once said: "You know it, you just don't know that you know it."

I truly believe that this will be a historic year for public education. So, we need you to get ready because we have work to do, both in and out of the classroom. In just a few weeks, the nation will elect a new President and a new Congress. Our most important and immediate task from now until November 4 is to organize, energize, and mobilize our members to get involved in this election. Having your say in the classroom begins with having your say at the ballot box.

But electing a President and Congress who are friends of education is only a means to an end. We know that this election will affect the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind, health care for children, and the repeal of the Social Security offsets. But it also has the potential to be the moment when our nation begins to renew its commitment to public education.

> "[This election] has the potential to be the moment when our nation begins to renew its commitment to public education."
>
> —DENNIS VAN ROEKEL

This commitment has always served our nation well. Public schools are one of our most beloved institutions. But this commitment has eroded over the past 30 years, as our government was dominated by an ideology of de-regulation, privatization, and huge tax breaks for the wealthy.

We have seen the tremendous toll that this ideology has had on our nation. The American people are ready for change—and this election year gives us an opportunity to transform public education so it will meet the needs of our students in the 21st century.

As we move forward beyond this school year, we cannot allow any further delay of our vision for public education in this country. We cannot sit back and watch the most important issue to our nation be kicked like a can down the road any longer. As educators, we must be accountable to each other. But more importantly, we must hold our elected leaders accountable. And if they can't see the light, then we must make them feel the heat.

If we are truly serious about achieving Great Public Schools for Every Student by 2020—then we must not forsake our responsibility, not even for a moment, and must give everything we've got to make this a reality. As your new President, this is my impassioned plea to you—to pour your hearts and souls into our vision like you never have before.

It will be your stories, your commitment and sacrifice that will finally lay to rest the awful disgrace of achievement gaps and dropout rates that are plaguing communities across this nation. I don't know about you, but I'm tired of the rationing of education in our country. And I'm ready to show the world that we are still that great nation that can unite for a great cause with a collective spirit and common purpose for the good of humanity. That time is right now.

Forty-seven years ago, President John F. Kennedy presented an audacious challenge before a joint session of Congress: send a man to the moon by the end of the decade. There were many who thought he was being unrealistic and that it could never happen.

But in the face of disbelief and cynicism, Kennedy's dream became a reality. Although Neil Armstrong took that giant step for humanity, the American collective will made it happen.

A great public school for every student by 2020 may sound impossible, but I believe this nation can make it happen. All we need is the will and the belief that we can do it!

Dennis Van Roekel

NEA PRESIDENT DENNIS VAN ROEKEL

PHOTO: SCOTT ISKOWITZ

What I hope students will remember most about me

As a school counselor for first through fourth graders, I'm often asked to work with children who have discipline problems. I try to create a place where students feel they have someone they can trust. I hope they'll remember that there was one place in school where no one disciplined them, was impatient with them, or shouted at them; that they had a place where they could talk safely about anything.

ARLYNE BERZAK
Paterson, New Jersey, with her frog friend who helps get kids talking

Growing up, I was quite the bookworm. Reading took me to amazing places, and my passion for reading and literature has only grown. When I'm teaching Shakespeare, Poe, and Wright, that passion is what I want my students to experience. Most kids think reading is boring and lame, so I show them my passion so that they, too, can feel it. I act out what I'm reading and get the students fully engrossed in the literature. I may make a fool of myself, but that's what I want them to remember in 20 years...that reading can be fun.

NICHOLE LESNIAK, *Woodbridge, New Jersey*

I recently started chemotherapy for breast cancer. I've had a mastectomy, and have lost my hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes. I'm tired a lot of the time. But I hope to show, by my actions and words, that the important things in life are love, compassion, and understanding. Some day, many of the students in my school will face cancer in their own lives. I want them to remember me and think, "Mrs. Barber did it with a smile," and not feel as afraid. I want them to remember courage and love when they think about me.

DONNA BARBER, *Miami, Oklahoma*

As a library media specialist, I hope that my students remember me as the librarian who actually talked to them! The libraries of my youth were as quiet as a graveyard. Librarians may have smiled at you, but nobody ever cheerfully asked, "How are you today?" or "What did you think about that book?" I always found it strange that books were so colorful and full of life and activity but the libraries that housed them were not. If my students have no conception of the clichéd librarian who wears glasses on a chain and constantly hisses "sshh!" then I have done my job!

JUDITH FURNARI, *Hannibal, New York*

Above all else, I hope my children will remember that I love them—I love them for who they are each day and who they will be in the future, and for everything they have overcome just to make it to school each day. I hope they will know that they are the reason I get up and go to work every morning, administration and NCLB notwithstanding. I hope they will know that the days when we bumped heads the hardest is when I loved them the most.

THEA DURLING, *Fitchburg, Massachusetts*

To carve out time for each child, I started inviting my second-graders to tea. We called it "Tea with M.E." (Miss Erickson). Each week, one table of students remained in our classroom for lunch. They brought their lunches, and I provided the tea, hot cocoa, and cups from my antique collection. It became a time to catch up, connect, and provide lessons in etiquette. At the end of the year, my students presented me with a handmade vase with the words: "We will always remember Tea with Miss E!"

JENNIFER ERICKSON, *Batavia, Illinois*

We want to hear from you!

WHAT'S THE MOST MEMORABLE GIFT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED FROM A STUDENT? PLEASE USE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES AND ANECDOTES, AND WE'LL CONSIDER YOUR SUBMISSION FOR AN UPCOMING ISSUE OF *NEA TODAY*. VISIT WWW.NEA.ORG/FORUMS OR EMAIL CINDY LONG AT CLONG@NEA.ORG.

PHOTO: NORMAN Y. LONO

WHEN IT COMES TO TEEN PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE, PARENTS NEED EDUCATION AS WELL.

You care about your students. And you probably know them as well as anyone. That's why you should be aware that while teen drug use is down overall, one category is actually on the rise — the abuse of prescription drugs. In fact, there are more new abusers (12 and older) of prescription drugs — such as pain relievers, depressants, and stimulants — than there are of marijuana.[1] Between 1995 and 2005, the number of substance abuse treatment admissions for prescription pain relievers increased by more than 300%.[2] **The bottom line is clear: Abusing prescription drugs can have serious consequences and ruin promising lives.**

Most students use prescription drugs appropriately — to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety, and physical pain. There is, however, a growing trend of students using and sharing these drugs to get high, often in combination with other drugs or alcohol. Seventy percent of persons aged 12 and older who abuse pain relievers say they get them from a friend or relative.[3] Obtaining these drugs can be as easy as opening the family medicine cabinet, a friend's purse, or locker. And since there is no smoke or smell, prescription drug abuse can be hard to detect.

This problem can be prevented. And as a school professional, you play an important role. Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of prescription drug abuse, and encourage parents, grandparents, and other adults to:

- Safeguard all drugs in their homes. Monitor quantities and control access.
- Set clear rules for teens about all drug use, including not sharing medicine and always following the medical provider's advice and dosages.
- Be a good role model by following these same rules with their own medicines.
- Properly conceal and dispose of old or unused medicines in the trash.
- Ask friends and family to safeguard their prescription drugs as well.

Watch for Signs & Symptoms of prescription drug abuse in your school:

Pain reliever abuse:	Constricted pupils, nausea and vomiting, and respiratory depression.
Stimulant abuse:	Anxiety and delusions, flushed skin, and chest pain with heart palpitations.
Depressant abuse:	Slurred speech, dizziness, and respiratory depression.

For more information on prescription drug disposal guidelines, as well as the risks, signs, and symptoms of teen prescription drug abuse, visit **www.TheAntiDrug.com**, or call 1-800-788-2800.

Signed,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of School Administrators
American Medical Association
American Pharmacists Association
American School Counselor Association
American School Health Association
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Education Association
Partnership for a Drug-Free America
PTA

[1] SAMHSA, 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (September 2007).
[2] Treatment Episode Data Set, SAMHSA, 1995-2005.
[3] SAMHSA, 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (September 2007).

Office of National Drug Control Policy

PARENTS.
THE ANTI-DRUG.

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Visit the What's Working in Your School section of the site to share YOUR OWN success stories in your public school or district.

PublicSchoolInsights.org is hosted by the Learning First Alliance, a partnership of 18 major national education associations that represent over 10 million dedicated educators, parents and education policymakers.

upfront

The Issue that Isn't

Why aren't the candidates pandering to you?

IF YOU'VE BEEN watching the presidential campaign unfold, you might think everything's fine in American classrooms. Otherwise somebody would be talking about them, right?

After the attention paid to the No Child Left Behind law in the 2006 elections, education activists can't be blamed for thinking that 2008 would be their opportunity to get their issues on the table. But education has been eclipsed by the war in Iraq and the economy.

A *U.S. News & World Report* story put it here: "[Education activists] are like the kid in the back...with his hand raised, whom the teacher never call[s] on because the other students are shouting for attention."

Instead of rising dropout rates, you read about skyrocketing gas prices. Instead of the crazy costs of college, you get the unbelievable costs of war. Just six months before the election, Republican candidate John McCain didn't even have a detailed education platform. Meanwhile, the Democrats offered not much more than lip service about NCLB reform, early education, and college affordability.

Still, there's no question that the next President will have a major role to play in pivotal policies, including No Child Left Behind, but also class size, school funding, vouchers, and teacher pay based on test scores. To learn more about where the candidates stand on these issues, and others, go to www.nea.org/educationvotes. It's not too late to get answers!

This year's winners **14**

Tracking kids **16**

Danger in the classroom **18**

U.S. CAPITOL: DHUSS, PUZZLED WOMAN: PHOTODISC

And the winners are...

Meet the Teacher of the Year

One day, you're in the White House Rose Garden, accepting the nation's top teaching honors from the President. A few days later, you're back in your seventh-grade classroom, singing disco hits for an enthusiastic crowd of young scientists and planning other diverse lessons to connect with every learning style.

MIKE GEISEN, a Crook County, Oregon, middle school science teacher, has struck solid gold this year, with his recent award as National Teacher of the Year—an unexpected honor, he says. "There are thousands and thousands of teachers doing amazing things in their classrooms. I'm just one of them."

Still, with his new platform, Geisen hopes to inspire his colleagues to be creative in the way they teach and brave about measuring their students' progress in new ways. It's not all about test scores, he says. At the same time, Geisen hopes to influence legislative representatives and policymakers to find more authentic assessments that don't just focus on reading and writing, but also the necessary skills for a 21st century workplace, like collaboration or creativity or technological literacy.

Meet the Education Support Professional of the Year

When school safety assistant **LAURA VERNON** strolls down the halls at Roosevelt Middle School in Milwaukee, students often will call out, "Yo! What's up, Mrs. Vernon?" They think she's pretty darn cool. Of course, here at NEA, we know she is—and that's why Vernon has been named the 2008 Education Support Professional of the Year.

As a school security guard with 850 students to keep safe, her job is "definitely challenging," she admits. But she adds, "These are our kids." And she likes them. Loves them even. "Some of these kids come to school with a lot of baggage," says Vernon, "and I love to help these kids."

In her 30 years with the Milwaukee Public Schools, Vernon has done everything from volunteering to tutor students during the summer to helping kids raise money so that poorer classmates can go to the prom.

"This is not just about a job," she said to the Wisconsin Education Association Council. "This is about helping children become good citizens—good adults—in our community."

RIBBON ILLUSTRATION: VERTES EDMOND MIHAI, GEISEN PHOTO: BRENT MCGREGOR AND KARA MICHAELSON, VERNON PHOTO: PETER ZUZGA

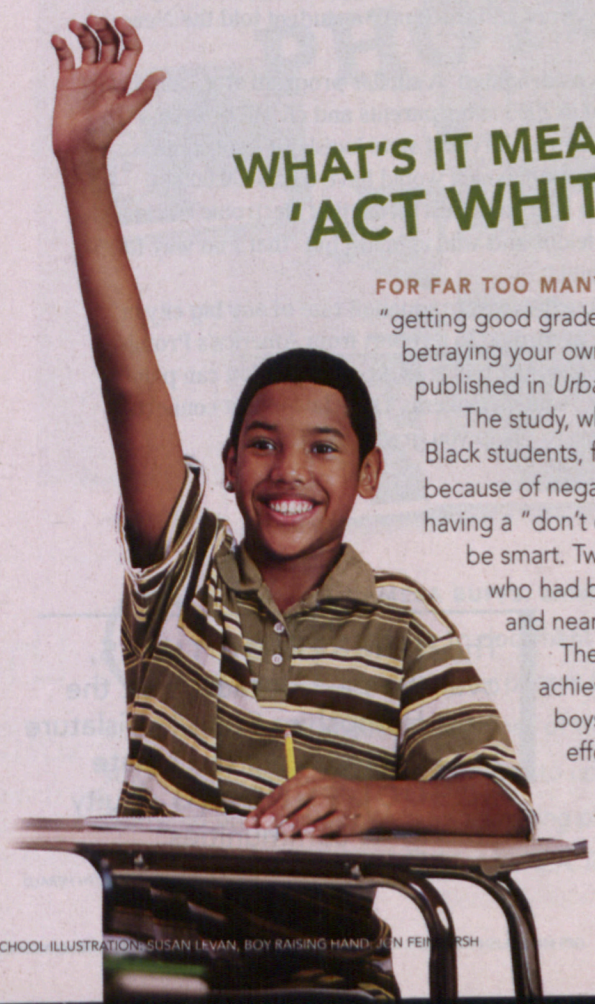
SURVIVOR: The Classroom

THIS IDEA for a new reality television show may have been Stanford University professor Linda Darling-Hammond's idea of a joke—but we love it! Take six business people and drop them into an elementary school, she suggested to educators attending a recent conference. Expect them to teach students with disabilities and others who don't speak English, all while documenting benchmarks and maintaining order. Sadly, our new contestants would have to give up their daily golf games. But that won't matter, she says, because they won't be able to afford the green fees on their new salaries!

18

The number of **STATES** where students will go to school this year for just **FOUR DAYS A WEEK,** in at least one school district, mostly to save money on transportation.

SOURCE: *THE STAR-TRIBUNE.*



WHAT'S IT MEAN TO 'ACT WHITE?'

FOR FAR TOO MANY gifted Black students, it stands for "getting good grades, being intelligent," and also betraying your own race, according to a recent study published in *Urban Education.*

The study, which examined the attitudes of gifted Black students, found many achieving below abilities because of negative peer pressure to "act Black"—having a "don't care" attitude or pretending not to be smart. Two-thirds said they knew someone who had been teased for doing well in school, and nearly half had been teased themselves.

These factors do contribute to an achievement gap, especially for Black boys. To help, talk to kids about how effort leads to success and showcase guest speakers and mentors that include Black people. Some students also may benefit from counseling, researchers said.

SCHOOL ILLUSTRATION: SUSAN LEVAN, BOY RAISING HAND: JEN FEINDT-MARSH

+ notepad

OPTING FOR PRIVACY

This year, thousands of high school students, mostly 11th-graders, will take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), a three-hour test that asks questions about reading, math, electronic and mechanical knowledge, as well as other subjects. The results are processed by the U.S. Department of Defense, as part of its "Career Explorations Program," and typically shared with both schools and military recruiters.

The test is optional, but test-takers are required to provide personal information, including phone numbers, if they want it to be graded. In turn, those contact numbers are shared with local military recruiters when they get the scores.

It doesn't have to be that way. Schools do have options regarding the release of information. Option 1, the default option, says "No special instructions," but Option 8 is "No release to recruiters," and there are other options in between that deal with phone numbers specifically or the timing of the release of information.

Have a great idea?

Send it by mail: *NEA Today*
1201 16th St., N.W.,
Washington, DC 20036

Send it by email:
neatoday@nea.org

Bishop to King, Classmate!

READING, WRITING, arithmetic, social studies, science, of course, and...chess? That's right. The centuries-old game of strategy has joined the academic canon in Idaho, becoming a regular part of the school week this year in all Idaho second- and third-grade classrooms.

Participation by teachers will be voluntary, but state officials believe they have lots of interested pawns (a joke!!) in state classrooms and they're planning to spend about $200,000 to send kings and queens to schools all over the state. This year, more than 100 teachers participated in a pilot program—with the hopes that chess would offer their students an opportunity to develop critical thinking skills. And while no scientific studies show that mastery of the squares has academic benefits, many believe it does.

"I saw firsthand that the program really does help students to improve critical thinking skills, increase math and reading aptitude, develop social skills, and build self-esteem," said Nicole DiMartino, a former teacher and director of program development for America's Foundation for Chess, the non-profit that developed the First Move curriculum used in Idaho and elsewhere.

SCHOOL AHEAD

Beep! Beep! Turn right for school!

IN DALLAS, TEXAS, a private investor has sponsored a pilot program that requires chronically truant high school students, selected by a judge, to wear a GPS monitor. "I'm actually happy about it, that I get another chance to do my work and catch up," a student told the *New York Times*.

But not everybody is as delighted. A similar program at a California elementary school ended in 2005, after parents and civil libertarians complained. Similarly, when a Maryland state legislator sponsored a GPS-for-truants bill last spring, which would have cost $400,000 to implement, a *Washington Post* columnist wrote that electronic tracking may be appropriate for felons and wild animals, but "that's no way for government to treat a child."

Still, Dallas has the fourth-worst graduation rate of any big city in America at 44.4 percent, according to a report from America's Promise Alliance. (Detroit's is the absolute pits at 24.4 percent.) "You can paint this thing as Big Brother," said its makers. "Or a device that connects you to a buddy who wants to...help you graduate."

34

The **NUMBER OF TIMES,** over the past decade, that the New Hampshire State Legislature has rejected a plan to create **SCHOOL FUNDING** equity among its communities.

SOURCE: *THE PORTSMOUTH HERALD*

GPS MAP: MUSHAKESA, GPS ICONS: GROFF CREATIVE, INC., CHESS PIECES: TISCHENKO IRINA

A plagiarism code that was...copied?

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Students at the University of Texas at San Antonio wanted to write an "honor code" that says no way to plagiarism and cheating. So they used somebody else's that they found online. Oops! Sheepish students told the Associated Press it was just an oversight, but that sounds like an awfully familiar excuse in the Internet age, doesn't it?

WE WANT YOUR PHOTOS

CALLING ALL CAMERA BUFFS, amateur photographers, and shutterbugs! Help us to document the working life of an educator in America. We want your photos from behind the teacher's desk or the bus driver's wheel, the sidelines of the soccer field, and the library stacks. Go to www.nea.org/ref?photos to upload your high-res digital shots. (Sorry, no print copies.) We'll be accepting photos through January 31, 2009, and plan to share the best of them in *NEA Today* and on www.nea.org.

> global takes

KEEPING THE WHEELS IN MOTION!

Your NEA lobbyists won the battle this summer to maintain Medicaid reimbursements for school-based administration and transportation services for some children with disabilities.

Originally the Bush Administration had sought to end those payments—to the tune of $635 million in the first year and $3.6 billion over five years—leaving the bill for already tapped-out states to cover. But, in late June, President Bush signed into law a $186.5 billion supplemental spending bill that delays the proposed regulations for another year—and also expands education benefits for veterans.

The law's new deadline is April 2009. But if we can get a new pro-public education President, perhaps the cuts can be put off for good! For ideas on making that happen, go to www.nea.org/educationvotes.

Want to share a story?

By mail: *NEA Today*
1201 16th St., N.W.,
Washington, DC 20036

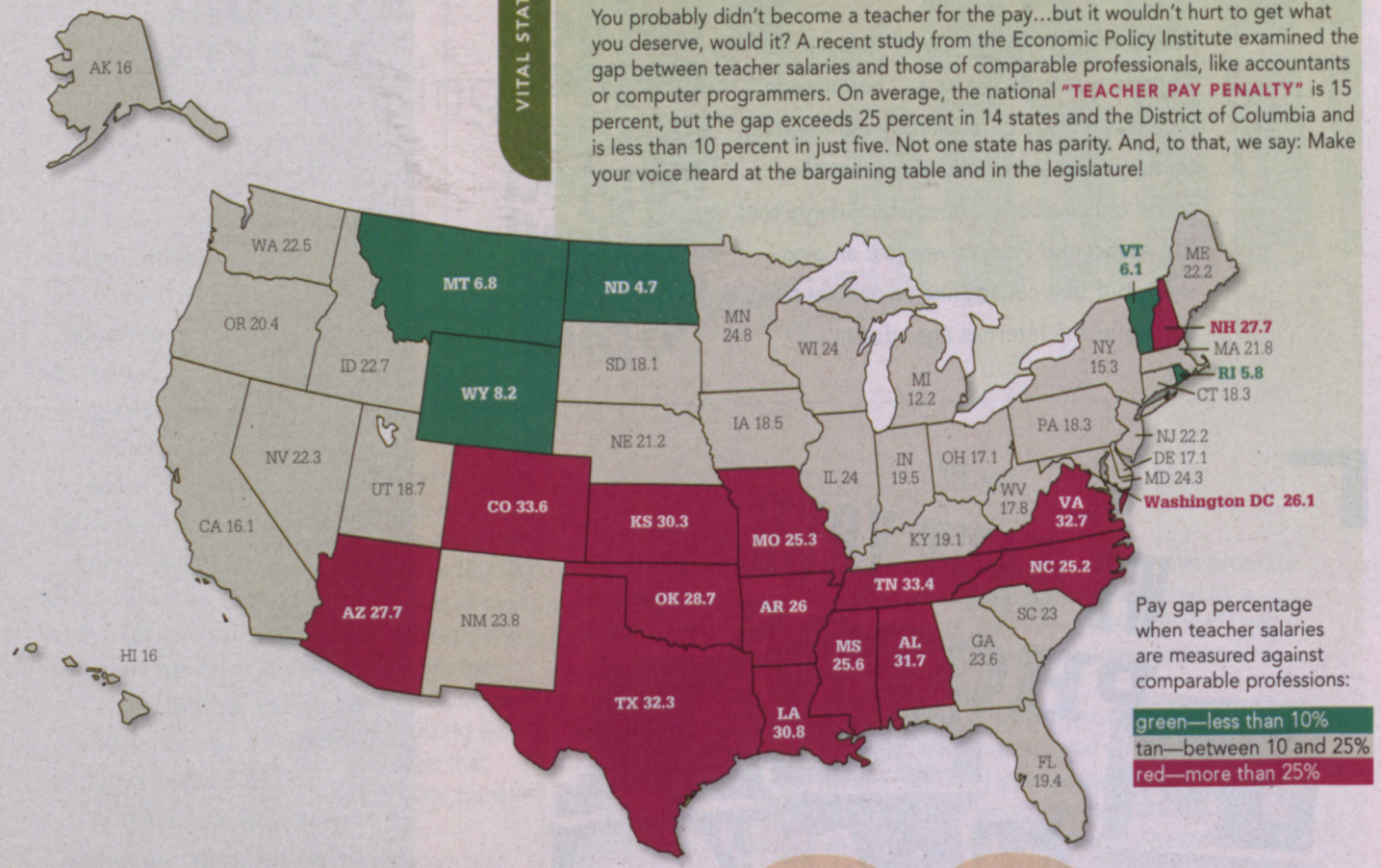
By email: neatoday@nea.org

KIDS IN CLASSROOM: NEED (CALIFORNIA STOCK SHOOT)

VITAL STATS

Show me the money!

You probably didn't become a teacher for the pay...but it wouldn't hurt to get what you deserve, would it? A recent study from the Economic Policy Institute examined the gap between teacher salaries and those of comparable professionals, like accountants or computer programmers. On average, the national **"TEACHER PAY PENALTY"** is 15 percent, but the gap exceeds 25 percent in 14 states and the District of Columbia and is less than 10 percent in just five. Not one state has parity. And, to that, we say: Make your voice heard at the bargaining table and in the legislature!



Pay gap percentage when teacher salaries are measured against comparable professions:

green—less than 10%
tan—between 10 and 25%
red—more than 25%

We wish we were kidding...

HERE'S THE PLAN: First one kid knocks you unconscious with a crystal paperweight, then a few more tie you up with handcuffs, duct tape, and electrical tape. Then another stabs you with a broken steak knife—because you scolded one of them for standing on a chair. Can this be real? Unfortunately, yes. Nine Georgia third-graders were caught with their weapons in school last spring. "We did not hear anybody say they intended to kill her, but could they have accidentally killed her? Absolutely," said local law enforcement.

28

The **INCREASE** in percentage of Teach for America **TEACHERS** placed in schools this year.

SOURCE: *THE NEW YORK TIMES.*

"We can't make the by weighing them

—NORTH CAROLINA GOV. MIKE EASLEY, WINNER OF NEA'S THE POINTLESSNESS OF TESTING CHILDREN MORE AND LEARN MORE. JULY 3, 2008

DUCT TAPE: KMITU

Book Focus

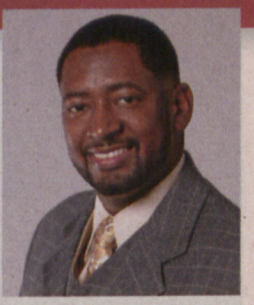
THE CHICKEN SOUP CURE

There's a reason the Chicken Soup for the Soul books have sold more than 100 million copies in more than 50 languages. When you read these collections of short, inspirational or motivational stories, you're captured by their emotional tug. Now, the latest to the series, *Chicken Soup for the Soul in the Classroom*—edited by NEA-Retired member Anna Unkovich, a secondary school teacher with more than 35 years of experience—offers stories that you can use with your students. There are two editions: one elementary and one secondary. Each offers dozens of short, powerful stories that you can read to students—the story of the little boy with leukemia who dreams of becoming a firefighter, or the little girl who sells more Girl Scout cookies than anybody else in the world. The books also offer discussion questions and activities. While most of the stories will be engaging to all, teachers do need to pre-read them carefully because some include religious references.

"cows heavier more often."

GREATEST EDUCATION GOVERNOR AWARD, ON MORE OFTEN WITHOUT ALSO HELPING THEM TO THE NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

Q&A



Byron Garrett

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, NATIONAL PTA

Byron Garrett, the national PTA's new CEO, has some challenging ideas about communication between parents and teachers, and the future of the venerable parent-teacher conference.

You've spoken about the potential of new technology in parent-teacher conferences. What do you have in mind?
We need to explore different ways: text messages, email. I would encourage teachers to use sites like YouTube, MySpace, Facebook. Teachers can create a Facebook page on the class, and parents could share stories and swap information. Maybe they can't come to the PTA meeting, but there may be a more convenient form of access. Think about 20-something parents—this is the easiest way for them to stay engaged.

What about the privacy problems with social networking sites?
I don't believe teachers should divulge personal information about their students or themselves on the sites. I would encourage educators to check with school administrators regarding specific policies. With these new types of media, the same policies apply in terms of what information can or cannot be shared.

Should teachers give parents their cell phone numbers?
I think teachers should be as accessible as you expect parents to be. But it's not a one-size-fits-all kind of thing. It's what makes sense case-by-case.

Will the traditional parent-teacher conference night go out of style?
Yes, partly. It's not that schools won't host them, because there's a segment that will always want to gather face to face. But as parents get busier, the time for parents to physically spend on campus may be more difficult to find. So the more technically savvy parents find creative ways to stay connected and engaged.

You're the national PTA's first male CEO, and next year, assuming President-elect Chuck Saylor becomes president, he'll be the first male president. But where are the dads in school? Are they still missing-in-action?
Historically, that was the case, but in the last five years, the percentage of fathers in PTA has gone from 3 percent to 10 percent. Partly, it's that there's been a big shift in the work force: moms go to work. Also, 10 years ago, there was a lot of talk about men mentoring. So now men are stepping beyond their traditional role in athletics and Scouting and saying, "How do I get more involved in the education and overall development of my child?"

Q/A PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE PTA

leading the way

NEA RA SETS SIGHTS ON LEADERS

Delegates elect a new NEA President and recommend a presidential candidate.

Delegates chose Dennis Van Roekel as President-elect at NEA's 2008 Representative Assembly, which met this summer in Washington, D.C.

Excitement over the potential for big changes in the No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) and other federal education policies after the fall elections pumped up delegates, who channeled their energy into setting policy for the year.

They voted overwhelmingly to recommend Sen. Barack Obama for U.S. President. Obama addressed the convention via satellite from Montana, where he was campaigning on the Fourth of July.

He pledged support for full funding of Title I and special education. And he said the nation should tell students, "If you commit your life to teaching, America will commit to paying for your college education."

That idea resonated especially with NEA Student Program members. Wearing "Got Tuition?" T-shirts, they were gathering videotaped tales of woe about student debt throughout the convention.

Obama noted that his sister is a teacher. "I know how hard she works," he said. "You're the people who stay past the last bell, spend your own money on books and supplies, and go beyond the call of duty....I'm tired of hearing teachers blamed for our problems."

Obama's attitude was in marked contrast with the approach of the current Administration, which has so far declared 28 percent of America's schools to be failing, regardless of the challenges they face trying to engage students who live in poverty, can't speak the language they are tested in, and in many cases don't even come to school. President Bush's first Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, called NEA a terrorist organization. His second, Margaret Spellings, declared that NCLB is "99.9 percent pure" like Ivory soap.

Obama, on the other hand, declared NEA's comprehensive proposal on the federal role in education, released during the RA, to be "a roadmap for educators, elected officials, policymakers, and all who care deeply about the future of our children to consider and debate."

That roadmap was distributed to RA delegates with an appeal from outgoing NEA President Reg Weaver to take its message home to parents and community groups and build grassroots support for change. The proposal calls on the federal government to:

SUPPORT the profession of teaching as a desired field of study and practice.

GUARANTEE full funding for Title I and special education.

PROMOTE equal access and opportunity for all students.

HELP states develop authentic accountability systems for schools using multiple measures.

ESTABLISH a federal education research institute free from political interference.

PROVIDE a clearinghouse for best practices to help states improve schools.

The delegates also debated and decided a wide range of policy matters such as:

HEALTH CARE—NEA will be active in the growing effort to extend health coverage to all, especially children.

PHOTO: RICK RUNION

RA delegates cheered for new leaders—including (at right) **NEA President Dennis Van Roekel, NEA Vice President Lily Eskelsen,** and (top center) **NEA Secretary-Treasurer Becky Pringle**—and a new day in Washington.

FOR MORE ON THE RA, INCLUDING PHOTOS, SPEECHES, AND NEW BUSINESS ITEMS, GO TO WWW.NEA.ORG/REF?RAACTION

CELL PHONES—NEA supports regulating their use in schools.

HIGH-STAKES GRADUATION TESTS—NEA will gather and disseminate information on the impact of these tests.

This year's Friend of Education award went to NASA Educator Astronaut Barbara Morgan, an elementary school teacher from Idaho, who accepted it on behalf of everyone in the hall because, she explained, "Everyone here is a friend of education." Morgan brought along packets of basil seeds that flew with her on the space shuttle. NASA wants students and teachers across the country to experiment with the seeds as part of research on growing food during long space flights. (To get some for your class, visit www.nea.org/ref?NASA.)

The 2008 Teacher of the Year, NEA member Michael Geisen of Washington State, spoke of the disconnect between the view from 30,000 feet that U.S. Department of Education officials seem to have of America's students—"identical little ants"—and what he sees on the ground level—"unique and beautiful human beings."

The NEA ESP of the Year, Milwaukee school safety assistant Laura Vernon, delivered a poem entitled "When Did We Become the Enemy," which had the Assembly up on its feet cheering.

The delegates elected new national leaders including Executive Committee members Princess Moss, president of the Virginia Education Association; Len Paolillo, chair of the NEA Committee on Legislation; and former Executive Committee member Becky Pringle, who will be Secretary-Treasurer. Pringle led the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Advisory Committee, which wrote *NEA's Positive Agenda for the ESEA Reauthorization.*

Former Secretary-Treasurer Lily Eskelsen was chosen to take office as Vice President September 1, the same day Vice President Van Roekel becomes President. Both were elected without opposition.

Van Roekel told the Assembly the cause of change is dissatisfaction, and "I can tell you, in 2008, I am not satisfied.

"I am not satisfied with a public education system that allows close to 50 percent of young African-American and Hispanic males not to get through school.

"And I am not satisfied that some children in this nation go to a school that is beautiful and well-equipped and modern in every way, and others go to a building that screams that society does not care about you.

"I hope every single one of you leaves this RA gloriously dissatisfied. I hope it gnaws deep down inside you so that you say, 'I can't stand it another moment!'

"The richest, most powerful nation in the world cannot provide for its children. Cannot provide health care, cannot provide education. Something is wrong, it needs to change."

> "I am not satisfied with a public education system that allows close to 50 percent of young African-American and Hispanic males not to get through school." —Dennis Van Roekel

PHOTOS LEFT: RICK RUNION; CENTER TOP AND BOTTOM: SCOTT ISKOWITZ; RIGHT: RICK RUNION

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PROUD TO BE ON THE WOMEN'S TEAM

At the national conference, empowered female ESPs share 'Big Girl Minutes' and learn to advocate.

BY JOHN ROSALES

Last March at the NEA ESP conference, Minnie Porter was bursting with vim and vigor despite sitting through a four-hour workshop. She said she could hardly wait for the second session of "For Women Only—We're Just Going To Deal With It," being offered the next morning.

Another 50 women had already signed up for that one, too.

"I think every woman should attend the workshop to appreciate their strengths and weaknesses," says Porter, a secretary in the counseling office at Reed Henderson High School in West Chester, Pennsylvania. "Due to decades of cultural conditioning, some women might think they are inferior, or may be perceived to be inferior by unenlightened men. We dealt with that."

The workshop was developed to address women's issues in the workplace and to emphasize female empowerment. Almost 75 percent of NEA's 492,000 education support professionals (ESPs) are women. This figure jumps to 90 percent in the job categories of paraprofessional, food services, clerical services, and health and student services.

When it comes to bus drivers and others in transportation services, women are 62 percent of the workforce. Security services, skilled trades, and custodial and technical service groups are disproportionately male. Though there are more female ESPs than male, most leadership positions at schools and locals are held by men.

"We talked about that," says workshop facilitator Kathie Oakes, a UniServ Director with the Michigan Education Association (MEA). "There was a lot of sharing and strategizing, but no male bashing."

The session was developed by Oakes and three other female UniServ directors in 2004 for MEA conferences. Oakes says the coordinators restricted the workshop to women so participants would be more open about personal issues.

"It's much more of a haven this way," says co-trainer Wendy Heinig. "Our male colleagues have shown nothing but respect [for the women-only mandate]."

Participants discussed male-female interaction, woman-to-woman conflict, and ESP confidence issues.

"ESPs look at what they do as a supportive role," Oakes says, "and they don't always see themselves as having the empowerment to be strong advocates."

In addition to addressing specific workplace issues like verbal and nonverbal communication and dressing for success, participants were encouraged to break free from stereotyping feminine behaviors, which can sabotage careers.

"Instead of being negative about our traits, we need to understand and celebrate them," says workshop participant Sandie Carner-Shafran, a teaching assistant from Saratoga Springs, New York. "If someone is a talker, let's work with that strength and give her a voice and opportunity to be on the negotiating team . . . instead of judging her in some cookie-cutter way."

This is not as easy as it sounds, says Carner-Shafran. When participants were shown photos of women, some participants couldn't help but make assumptions about the women by what they were wearing.

"When I look at women now, I'm not going to judge whether their handbag matches their shoes," she says. "I'm going to think about what they bring to the table."

The workshop's original title, "Put on Your Big Girl Panties and Deal With It," was toned down for the national conference. "We've never had anyone offended by the title," says Oakes, "but we agreed to change it."

The sessions were organized in discussion blocks. Each hour featured a "Big Girl Minute" where participants stood and shared success stories and secrets.

"I told the group about negotiating a higher rate of pay for my clerical aides when they did extra work," says MaryAnn Miller, a New Jersey secretary and vice president for secretaries of the Woodbridge Township Education Association. "I learned to advocate more assertively for my members."

ILLUSTRATION: JIM NUTTLE

Future Tense?

We peek ahead (with your help!) at what's in store for you this year.

BY CYNTHIA KOPKOWSKI

Too often, speculation about the future of education feels so removed from reality, it might as well be about teachers buzzing around the classroom on hovercrafts and cafeteria robots dispensing lunch in capsule form. (Yay, it's pizza pellet day!) But for many teachers and support professionals, that's not the practical look ahead that they want. As the school year gets under way, they're wondering what's in store for them in the next 10 months.

How will events outside and inside the classroom affect them? We went to the experts—folks whose job it is to divine the tea leaves in their fields—and asked for their educated guesses.

And since nobody gives a better educated guess about their own situation than an actual educator (a concept that not all legislators and policymakers have grasped), we talked to NEA members to see what they think lies ahead. Come along as we take a sneak peek at 2008–09. No hovercraft necessary.

It's a presidential election year so the airwaves are going to continue to buzz with candidates' concrete plans for fostering great public schools for all children, right? Er, don't count on it. NEA leaders have been imploring candidates to address education priorities substantively in public appearances throughout the primary and general election, yet in most debates there has been more talk about American flag lapel pins. It's not going to get any better through the election or in the aftermath, says Larry Sabato, the political pundit, author, and university professor at the helm of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics. Sabato's "Crystal Ball" Web site has been dubbed the Web's most accurate political analysis, and he is a mainstay on cable news shows.

"This is a so-called 'big ticket' election year, dominated by Bush, Iraq, the economy, food, gas prices, the housing crisis, and the like," says Sabato. "As important as education is, it is not going to be a focus of this election." After November 4, the new President's term will likely be dominated by the same big ticket items, says Sabato. "Unfortunately, education tends to be an issue on the shelf, and it's taken off the shelf only in calmer times. As we all know, it is so central to the nation's future that it ought to be in the top three issues every election year."

Here's what members predict will happen as a result of the November elections:

"The economy gets worse and my pay doesn't keep up with costs.
Geraldine Transue
Colchester, Connecticut

There will be greater appreciation of education and less emphasis on NCLB.
Luann Smith
Virginia Beach, Virginia

There won't be any immediate effects
Carol Gibson
Devils Lake, North Dakota

FORTUNE TELLER: GROFF CREATIVE, INC., BUTTON: JILL FROMER

Hopefully, the new President will do something about No Child Left Behind, so that we can focus a little bit more on students learning information instead of learning for tests.
Nikki Royal
Granite Falls, Minnesota

The promises will end, the rhetoric will stop, and I'll be left trying to figure out how to pay for pencils.
Bobee-Kay Clark
Sparks, Nevada

Things will change more culturally and financially than professionally.
Eric James
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Funding for the educational system will decrease.
Connie Spivey
Memphis, Tennessee

I hope to see a change in leadership at the Department of Education with a better understanding of how to implement effective teaching strategies and less of an emphasis on testing.
Dottie Handley-More
Seattle, Washington

I think it will bring the nation's attention back to American soil. We need to be worried about bridges, roads, energy, education—the foundations of our country.
John Horton
Saint Paul, Minnesota

Retirement/Health Care

Economic woes will continue pummeling members and threatening retirement and health care benefits. As states wrestle with cash-strapped budgets, they'll be making increasingly onerous demands of members at the bargaining table, says NEA health care analyst Carole Malone. That includes pressuring employees to start paying for more of their health care premiums or pushing them into plans with higher deductibles. Additionally, "employers are going to membership and to the leaders saying the employees have to bear more responsibility for their personal health care decisions," says Malone, including demands that they shop for lower-cost services.

Similarly, public pensions will see their investment returns drop below where they were last year. "That will increase the pressure on public pension plans to either change benefits, eligibility, or move to a defined-contribution plan," says Nancy McKenzie, senior pension specialist for NEA. Maneuvering to reduce employee representation on retirement plan boards will abound in attempts to quell voices of those concerned about employers switching to noxious defined-contribution plans that threaten retirement security.

Don't get discouraged, though. Key victories for public employees—thanks to the National Public Pension Coalition (which includes NEA)—give hope and guidance for the battles ahead. For example, in West Virginia, teachers voted in June to switch from an underwhelming defined-contribution plan to a traditional pension plan. They are now eligible for a system that gives them a defined pension based on their salary at the time of retirement and their years of service.

The year has just started, and teachers and education support professionals already know that for many of their colleagues it will be their last:

"The turnover at my school will be about 20 teachers, based on previous years.
Sheila Diaz
San Pedro, California

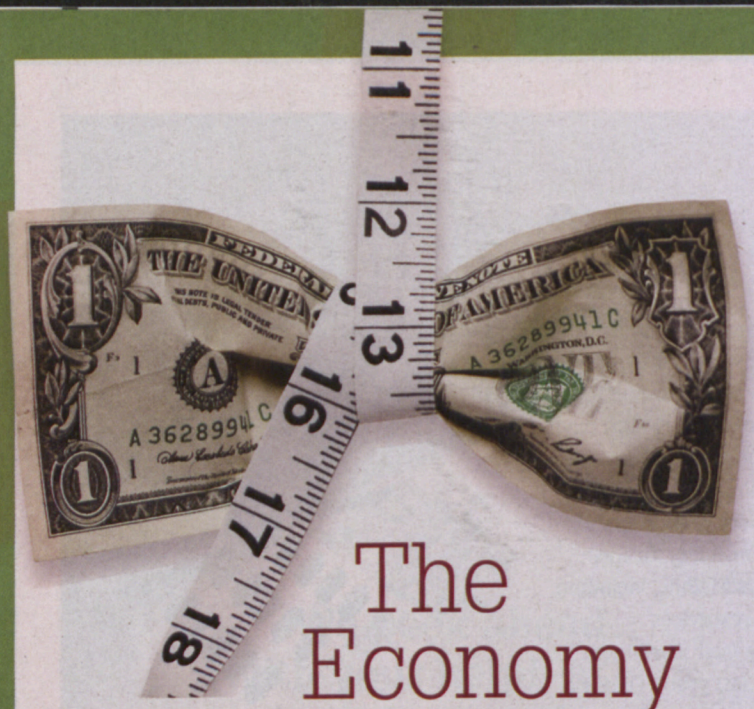
Twenty-one just retired, but no one in my school will retire this year to get out of the profession. If anyone does quit, it will be because they want to stay home with their child/children. We have a very unique school.
Stacy Kasse
Cherry Hill, New Jersey

I will guess that of all my co-bus drivers, 25 percent will opt for the earliest age retirement package possible. As budgets get tighter, buses get fuller and more unmanageable.
Deedra Pedersen
Boise, Idaho

In my district, many experienced teachers are retiring. It is changing the way education is delivered.
Angela Watts
Phoenix, Arizona

No one can afford to leave.
Deborah Morgan,
Mt. Morris, Pennsylvania

PENCILS: MAXIM GODKIN, ATOM: RONI MARKOWITZ, PILLS: RANNEV, PIGGY BANK: CHRIS HOWEY



The Economy

If you're nervous that you're going to need a bank loan just to get gas or groceries, don't expect relief. Also, fallout from the real estate market collapse (think trillions of dollars lost) will continue dragging down the economy. To put it bluntly, it's going to be a bad year for the wallet, says David Baker, co-director of the Center for Economic Policy Research. "We're going to be in a recession." Teacher Kerri Brown summed up what's happening in Hutchinson, Kansas. "Our insurance alone is going up $900. Gas and the mileage to our country school will more than eat up what is left" of a $1,500 raise. "We need so much more to make ends meet."

As housing prices fall, owners are losing home equity. Those approaching retirement who were counting on that equity as a retirement savings plan are in even worse shape and will have to cut spending. At the same time, inflation is likely to accelerate, an increase that will be felt most noticeably in food and energy prices. Educators will be hit hard as local governments facing mounting deficits and increased operational costs try to save money wherever they can—especially in wages, says Baker. Also, the price on goods imported from Europe and China are going to escalate noticeably, he says. That's a scary thought when most of the wares on the shelves now are stamped "Made in China."

Asked if they'll get a raise that stays ahead of inflation, members' pessimism prevailed:

YES—11%
NO—89%

"Our local actually works to make that happen."
Deborah Barnes
Milwaukee, Oregon

"If you're not ahead of inflation now, you certainly won't be anytime soon."
Carimenia Hampshire
Green Cove Springs, Florida

"This is a maybe. Or better yet, Lord, I hope so!"
Terri Fletcher-Herring
Greensboro, North Carolina

"I am anticipating a raise of about 6.2 percent."
Donald Wiest
Superior, Nebraska

"Are you kidding?!"
Deborah Rosenman
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

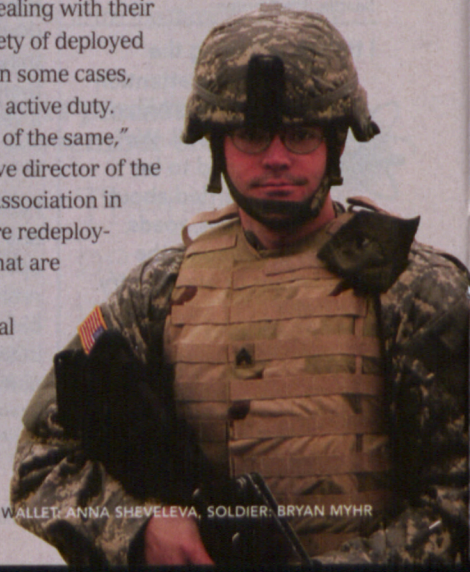
And what do you think a gallon of gas will cost this year? (Asked in July)

"This is a major concern. The county in which I teach is dealing with a significant budget reduction. Those of us in the classrooms are facing salary cuts. Gas is already one of the biggest contributors to my monthly expenses."
Jana Bailey
St. Petersburg, Florida

War in Iraq and Afghanistan

With roughly 150,000 U.S. troops currently in Iraq and another 32,000 in Afghanistan, thousands of teachers and education support professionals continue to be on a psychological frontline, working with service personnel's children. That means helping students with related separation anxiety, stress, discipline problems, and absences. All the while, some educators are also dealing with their own anxieties over the safety of deployed loved ones or colleagues. In some cases, they themselves are facing active duty. This year will mean "more of the same," says Joyce Raezer, executive director of the National Military Family Association in Alexandria, Virginia. "More redeployments, and deployments that are still way too long."

Educators play a critical role. For practical tips on how to help, head to www.nea.org/ref?war

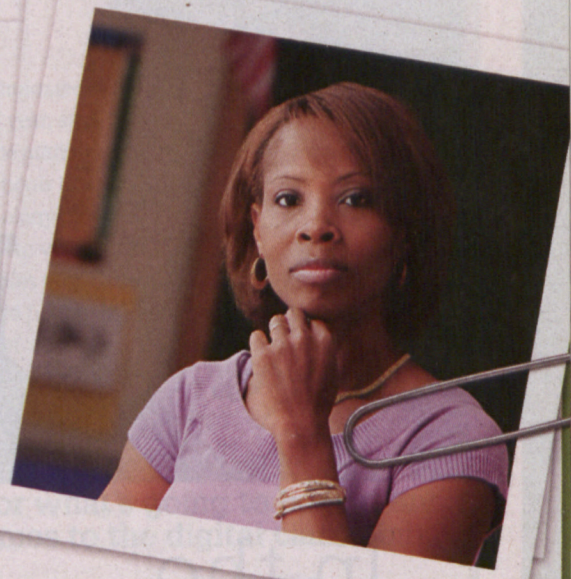


SQUEEZED DOLLAR: CHRISTOPHER EDWIN NUZZACO, WALLET: ANNA SHEVELEVA, SOLDIER: BRYAN MYHR

NCLB

It could mean significant changes in your classroom when it happens, but the chance that Congress will move to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (the so-called No Child Left Behind law or NCLB) before the election, hovers "between zero and minus-five percent," says Joel Packer, director of NEA Education Policy and Practice. "It's not happening." President Bush and Congress are in a stalemate over the law. After the election, though, is a different story. A President Obama would likely mean a "strong driving force" on fundamentally overhauling the law and allocating more money for its implementation, says Packer. A President McCain would be harder to read, he says, because the candidate hasn't offered many details on his policy regarding the law, other than vocalizing support for it.

Chief among the questions swirling around NCLB if it's tackled in depth next calendar year is how much flexibility there will be with the testing and sanctions that now constrict schools. Namely, observers are wondering if states will be allowed to demonstrate students' progress with anything other than test scores, such as graduation rates or alternative tests. In the upcoming year, we hope legislators and the White House will realize that the mandate that all students be at 100 percent reading and math proficiency within the next five years is unattainable, says Packer.



Most immediately pressing: It's going to be harder in every state to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) this year. That's because it's the last year in a three-year cycle in which the bar moves up on states. "You'll probably have more and more schools failing this year," says Packer. Without any policy changes to advocate for this year, it's crucial that education advocates (that means you!) continue to make the case to their Republican and Democratic representatives and senators that the law needs an overhaul. And come election day, those who grasp that need get voted into office.

Members gave a snapshot of how many of their students will have parents serving in war zones this year:

"Since I am a librarian serving 2,000 students, I think I may have about 20 students whose parents are serving. Right now one of my fellow teachers is over in Iraq.
Shelly Curran
Deptford, New Jersey

Hopefully none. My own son was killed in Iraq on July 21, 2007, and a family member of one of my students was killed in Iraq two weeks before Christmas. With a student population of only 130 students K–12 in our school, losing two family members in five months was way too many.
Patty Shuemecker
Atkinson, Nebraska

At least 70 percent.
Sheila Diaz
San Pedro, California

Some of our students graduating this year will be serving in the years ahead if we don't get out of there.
Lisa Barret
Shavertown, Pennsylvania

Two thousand (in the district).
Carly Weisthal
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Three. Living in a high-income school district, many of our students' family members are not involved in the war.
Eric O'Brien
Westbury, New York"

This year members are wondering whether changes to NCLB will affect their professional certification. They said:

YES, IT WILL CHANGE—36%
NO, IT WON'T CHANGE—64%

"My degree is in language and literature, plus secondary ed, plus reading specialist, plus a master's in curriculum and instruction. If they need more than that to teach junior high school I will walk away.
Kerri Brown
Hutchinson, Kansas

I have a master's degree plus 30 some hours and a permanent certificate. But who knows? Teachers always have the bar raised.
Megan Nickolette
Avon Lake, Ohio

If anything, I expect the powers that be to make it even more difficult to be a teacher.
Frank Sharbono
Glendale, Arizona"

TEACHER: CORBIS, PAPER CLIP: PEPPPIC, PHOTO ASSEMBLY: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.

In the Classroom

Increased pressure to raise student test scores means you can expect more questioning from parents about their children's performance, according to the president of the national Parent Teacher Association. "Parents are really going to start being much stronger advocates for their children," says Jan Harp Domene. That's a good thing, as research indicates that children whose parents are actively engaged in their schooling perform better. What's crucial, though, is making sure that there is a two-way flow of communication. "We have to focus on parents and teachers as partners in this," says Domene.

On the down side, expect to see more signs of stress from the economy affecting your students' families. "They're losing their homes, having a hard time filling their gas tanks, and that's going to put a big stress on families," says Domene. Another trend Domene expects to grow: fathers being more engaged in their students' education. Economic woes mean that in many families both parents are now working if they weren't before, so fathers are "picking up some of the slack and becoming active participants with teachers," she says.

What are you most nervous about teaching or dealing with at school this year?

Teaching creationism.
Jerome Hardin
Pensacola, Florida

Starting a high school band.
B.J. Hascall
Nipoma, California

I work with students in crisis and see an increasing number of students who need to be evaluated for depression, anxiety, bullying, suicide, abuse, and other life-threatening situations. The quantity is overwhelming and with further staff reductions, I am nervous about handling an increasing number of crisis situations.
Ranae Lapin
Boca Raton, Florida

Keeping teacher morale up while reducing resources and supplies.
Andee Aceves
La Mesa, California

Absolutely nothing.
Tory Cooper
Jacksonville, Oregon

Miscellaneous Classroom Concerns

How much money will educators spend on school supplies?

LOWEST ANSWER:
Less than $20—I am lucky enough to get help from our PTO to meet the cost needs of my classroom.
Ranae Albert
El Dorado, Kansas

HIGHEST ANSWER:
I spend about $5,000 a year to supplement my books, standardized testing materials, and supplies for my students.
Judith Livingston
Simsbury, Connecticut

How many times will the copier or SMART Board break?

Is a million too many?
Cheryl Best
Staunton, Illinois

How many hours will you work each week on average (for full-time employees)?

55
Average answer from all respondents

What new teaching technique will you try this year?

Never know. The teachers of the students I transport often help me with student-specific strategies to make the bus experience better.
Deedra Pederson
Boise, Idaho

More Web-based projects.
Charles New
Memphis, Tennessee

I want to become "green" and will ask the students to do the same.
Lisa Barrett
Shavertown, Pennsylvania

More stations for experimentation.
Kimberly Ihle
Pflugerville, Texas

Developing primary source documents for Civil War and voting rights units. (Trying to engage students and get them to use reliable sources and databases instead of Google is tough.)
Shelly Curran
Deptford, New Jersey

Puppet theaters for fluency practice.
Bobee-Kay Clark
Sparks, Nevada

What I learned from other teachers during vacation.
Gwendolyn F. Myers
Monroe, Michigan

TEACHER MEETING: AMERICAN IMAGES INC. TUBA: SERGIY GORUPPA

Educating my school about disability awareness (students and faculty/staff alike).
Tracy Black
Mansfield, Massachusetts

Continued debacle of Iraq and students whose parents are there.
Luann Smith
Virginia Beach, Virginia

I am concerned about having my students meet the bar for writing requirements. They come to me at so many levels of skill that it's always hard to move them along together successfully so that those who struggle will do better and those who do well can go beyond.
Jennifer Squillaci
Wayne, New Jersey

Nanotechnology.
Sandra Ferland
Hebron, Maine

Becoming a new mother!
Angela Dickey
Portland, Oregon

Fundraising.
Pearl Lawson
Cupertino, California

Not sure. But after 26 years of teaching, I'm still open.
Karen Lafary
Macomb, Illinois

Integrating technology more seamlessly into my classroom routine.
Leanne Raddatz
Bakersfield, California

Moving more toward students planning and assessing the lessons.
Kathy Coughlin
Olathe, Kansas

Anything that works!
Deborah Rosenman
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

Technology

Any notion that educators are somehow intimidated by new technology should be out the window this year, says Kathy Schrock, an NEA member who is the administrator for technology for schools in the Nauset Public Schools district in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and the teaching technology guru for the Discovery Channel. As teachers become more savvy Internet and computer users, they understand the possibilities now to use "2.0 tools" to connect with students, colleagues, and parents and are anxious to delve into the how-to, says Schrock. "Before we would have to feed them successful practices and then they would take their leap," she says. "Now they know where they want to be, they just don't know quite how to get there."

Here are Schrock's predictions for what's going to be hot, and what's not, this year when it comes to the digital classroom.

HOT

LAPTOP computers

MINI-COMPUTERS that cost less than $400.

FLASH DRIVES that let students load up computer contents and take them anywhere.

POSTING DOCUMENTS to a 2.0 site accessible from any computer using a program like Google Docs.

SECOND LIFE, the virtual 3-D world of social networking, to interest students in classroom discussion. (They can meet online for group work or network with students across the globe.)

SECOND LIFE for professional development sessions that cross district and state borders allowing for national collaboration.

ONLINE COLLABORATIVE Web 2.0 applications.

DIGITAL CAMERAS to enhance classroom activity.

MICROBLOGGING tools like Twitter.com for professional development. (Put a question out to the Twitter community and within minutes get answers back from across the globe.)

GIVING STUDENTS school email accounts.

NOT

DESKTOP computers (too cumbersome!)

PROPRIETARY SOFTWARE. It can be costly and clunky and it's tied to one specific computer.

TYPED PAPERS and hard copies of teaching documents.

SENDING DOCUMENTS to students and parents via email.

TEXTBOOK-AND-WORKSHEET-ONLY instruction

BORING PROFESSIONAL development sessions on uncomfortable folding chairs with people in your school only.

We learned that educators have their eyes on some gadgets when we asked what new technology they will experiment with this year.

Palm Pilots
Tom Whalen
Erie, Pennsylvania

SMART Board
Migdalia Rivera
Kissimmee, Florida

Clickers
Dolly Handel
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Biotechnology equipment
Marilyn Bowe
Hinesville, Georgia

nea.org **Find more on NEA.org**

VISIT WWW.NEA.ORG/REF?FUTURE to give us your predictions for the year ahead!

Send comments on this story to ckopkowski@nea.org

LAPTOP: RPIXS, HANDHELD DEVICE: MAXIM TUPIKOV

When the ship sails adrift

School has just started and you're already on your way to the island of chaos. How can you get your classroom management back on track?

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

You and your class set sail just a few weeks ago, straight toward the idyll of learning, and already this journey is a mess! You've got disinterested nymphs in the front row, a whirlpool of time-wasters in the corner, and an undisciplined crew in the back. Unless you can turn this ship around, these 180 days are going to feel like the 10-year Trojan War.

Take heart, sailor! It's never too late to get your classroom's compass oriented to N—for No Nonsense, kiddos. Your colleagues, many of them master navigators of the classroom, have plenty of time-tested, effective advice.

"Every day is a new day," says Peg Scholl, a Missouri second-grade teacher, who has calmly and capably captained her classroom for a whopping 36 years. Scholl, who also trains new teachers in her state's I Can Do It! classroom management workshops, adds, "It's never too late to change."

WHILE YOU MAY think you're hearing a bit too much from some students, seemingly trying their worst to lure you onto the rocks, it might actually be helpful to have a frank conversation with the would-be Sirens.

"My very first year, I had exactly that [chaos]. I was unfamiliar with the school structure, unfamiliar with the curriculum, and part of it was that I wasn't all that familiar with what middle school was like," recalls Kate Ortiz, an Iowa teacher who has taught everything from K-6 to graduate school, including special education, and who also trains new colleagues in management techniques.

"I sat down with every class—all five sections—and said, 'Things are not going well. Here are the things that I'm concerned about. And what I need to know are your suggestions for making things go better. Remember, our goal is to learn. I may not agree with every suggestion, but I will listen to them.'"

Dave Foley, a Michigan retiree, and author of *Ultimate Classroom Control Handbook*, also favors a direct approach. "I'll say, 'We're having trouble getting some things done and we have some control issues, and I think I'm going to have to tighten things up....Or I'll sit down with the one kid and say, 'You're kind of making it difficult for me here. Is there anything I can do to help you to behave better?' And you listen."

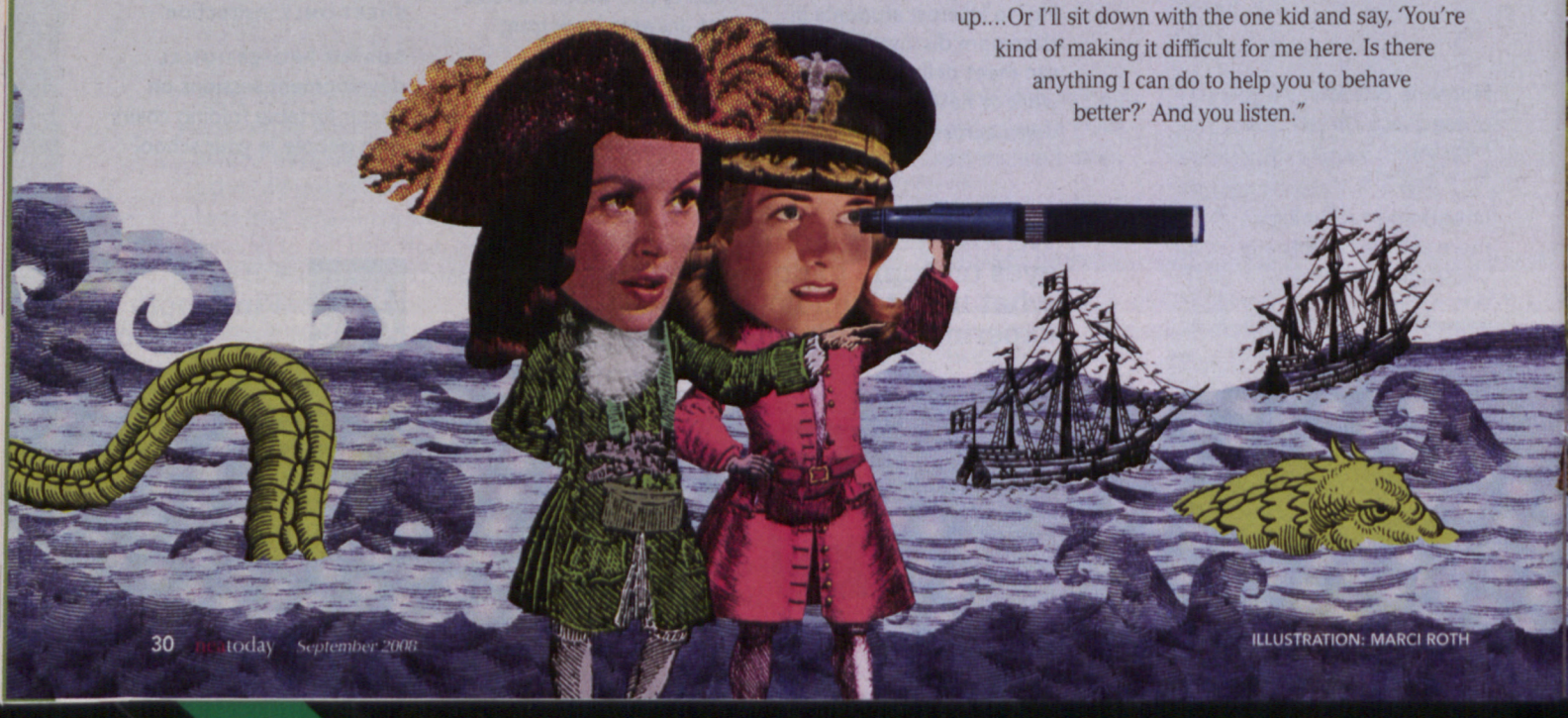


ILLUSTRATION: MARCI ROTH

ORTIZ CALLS IT a "survey": she asks students to write their responses to questions. What's going right in this class? What's something that should change (and how would you change it?) And "what else I want Mrs. Ortiz to know..." She reports the results to her students, as well as her responses. And she does these kinds of barometric measurements at least twice a year.

Jim Burke, a California high school teacher and author of *The Teacher's Essential Guide to Classroom Management*, calls them "exit cards," distributed at the end of a class period. He also uses them to give a constructive voice to his students.

"The classroom is a very complicated political space. You have kids, who, on the one hand, are supposed to be learning the skills and knowledge that they need to succeed in the adult world, independently. At the same time, they're getting the message that they have no voice. 'This is just the way it is. Sit down.'"

When the waters get rough, Burke uses the cards to gather anonymous suggestions on how to improve the class. "You have to be able to follow through," Burke cautions. "If I do that, I'm going to come in the next day and say, 'I got some good comments, I definitely appreciate that, a lot of you were saying this... and so we're going to handle that another way....' It lets them see that you're listening to them, and that you're in it together."

SO YOU GET the kids on board. But you also might need some adult help—a reliable Starbuck, so to speak. While many new teachers are assigned mentors, any teacher can (and should) ask for a colleague's help. Vermont's Kathy Buley, a 29-year veteran of second grade, also leads training with her colleagues and says, "It always brings me back to the belief that it's the shared colleagueship and ability to reflect on practice where we get solutions to our problems that we face daily."

Specifically, it can be very helpful to have a colleague visit your classroom during their prep period, Ortiz suggests. Not long ago, Ortiz observed a colleague whose classroom was "way out of control, all this talking out and talking back....I visited and said, 'Here's what I noticed: How do kids get your attention?' And she said, 'They come up to me, they tap me, they yell....' 'Well, how do you want them to get your attention?'"

"Sometimes, when we're in the thick of it, we don't notice what's going on," Ortiz notes. Videotaping yourself can help, too.

Burke also recommends visiting other teachers' classrooms to see how they get things done. (Some good questions to ask yourself: How do they welcome students? Do their students start work immediately? What happens when students don't 'get it'?) In an extreme situation, you probably could convince your administrator to hire a substitute for you for the day.

OTHER STRATEGIES to consider: Are all your pirates parked together, conspiring to hijack your class? Ortiz changes seat assignments monthly. "I don't think it's fair to make somebody sit next to the same person for the whole year," she says. But changing seats—without setting behavior expectations, isn't going to help much, she warns.

So consider writing a behavior contract with your students. And "with" is the key word in that last sentence. Make clear that there are rewards and punishments for their behavior, Foley advises. He used to take his best classes outside—what fun! Those kinds of rewards create positive peer pressure to behave.

And, of course, don't forget parents. "Calling parents scares teachers—even ones who have been teaching for years! They can deal with the wildest kids in the class, but they're nervous about calling parents," Foley says. "Use the right words—say, 'Can we work together on this, can we kind of team up?' Very few parents will say they don't want to work with you."

The more allies you have on the high seas, the smoother your sailing will be. nea

Send comments on this story to mflannery@nea.org

10 Things You Should Know About Barack Obama

When Sen. Barack Obama addressed NEA's Representative Assembly this summer, the more than 9,000 delegates greeting him with cheers already knew that he'd be the best advocate for public education to land in the White House in a long time. Just a day earlier they'd voted overwhelmingly to support his campaign for the U.S. Presidency. See how much you know about the candidate who had a humble upbringing in Hawaii, established his public service roots on Chicago's South Side, and now embodies the promise of America for so many.

1 Patriotism's in this candidate's blood. Obama's grandfather risked his life in World War II, enlisting after Pearl Harbor and serving in Europe. Back on the homefront, his grandmother worked on a bomber assembly line, constructing machinery for U.S. troops. Obama was born in Hawaii and raised by his single mother there.

2 Community came first for him. After graduating from Columbia University, Obama put law school and corporate life on hold and moved to Chicago to become a community organizer, helping poverty-stricken neighborhoods affected by factory closings with a church-based group. (He became a devout Christian during that time.) After graduating from Harvard in 1991, he went on to serve in the Illinois State Senate and then the U.S. Senate, where he was the third African American since Reconstruction elected to that body.

3 He knows your financial woes. With gas and food prices, health care costs, and college tuitions rising, Obama knows there's a need to help middle class Americans who are being squeezed financially. He will cut taxes for 150 million middle class Americans and pay for it by ending tax breaks for millionaires. He wants to protect American jobs by rewarding companies that keep operations here.

4 Bob Dylan and Sheryl Crow have his ear. In an interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine, Obama said that his iPod reveals he's a big fan of Dylan and Crow, along with Earth, Wind & Fire, Bruce Springsteen, Stevie Wonder, and Miles Davis.

5 He's putting parents on notice. Obama believes that parents need to be involved in their children's education. He doesn't tiptoe around them, making the point in campaign speeches that they need to turn off their children's TV, put away their video games, and help them with their homework. "We have to hold ourselves accountable, not just our schools, not just our teachers, but our parents, our community, our President," Obama told NEA members this summer.

6 Tests aren't tops for him. That's why he wants assessment tests to measure individualized growth and readiness, not just the ability to take a test. He believes students should be evaluated on multiple measures, not just student test scores. He will reform the No Child Left Behind law, starting with funding it adequately. He will also improve its accountability system so that schools that need improvement get support, not punishment.

7 Clean living is his credo. A former cigarette smoker, Obama stubbed out his last one two years ago before he started to campaign. He is also an avid basketball player, dating back to his varsity high school days.

8 Three things make him proudest. The candidate says those are his wife Michelle, daughters Malia, 10, and Sasha, 7. Considering that Mrs. Obama is a Princeton and Harvard Law grad, worked in public service in Chicago, founded a program that prepared young adults for public sector careers, and developed the University of Chicago's first community service program, who could blame him?

9 He wants you to earn more money. Recognizing that educators are the cornerstone of a good education and that the cost of living is skyrocketing, he knows they need to make a decent living with good health insurance. As President, he will increase teacher pay and reward teachers for working in underserved areas and for serving as mentors to other teachers, so good teachers can afford to stay in the classroom. And Obama told NEA members this summer that he'll ensure a free college education for people who commit to becoming teachers.

10 His favorite food? Chili!

How Obama became NEA's recommended candidate

After reading through questionnaires and interviewing the presidential contenders more than a year ago, the NEA PAC Council—made up of all state Association presidents, national officers, and heads of NEA member caucuses—developed a list of "acceptable" candidates based on their commitment to public education. Obama was one of many to respond. Sen. John McCain chose not to return the Council's questionnaire, so he did not get an interview. After a studied analysis of the acceptable candidates and their positions on everything from professional pay to No Child Left Behind, the PAC then unanimously asked the NEA's Representative Assembly (RA) to recommend that members support Obama. The RA made the final decision by a secret ballot vote in July, when 80 percent of delegates voted in favor of Obama. The vote was well above the minimum of 58 percent required by NEA bylaws.

nea.org

For a detailed comparison of Sen. Barack Obama and Republican nominee Sen. John McCain's education positions, head to WWW.NEA.ORG/EDUCATIONVOTES.

FLAG: JILL FROMER; IPOD: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.; OBAMA FAMILY: CORBIS; PHOTO FRAME: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.; QUARTER: RADLOVSK YAROSLAV; BOWL OF CHILI: DANNY E. HOOKS

A hardworking district strikes a balance where the U.S. meets Mexico.

THE BORDER

BY JOHN ROSALES

Ask George Borrego for the best place to eat dinner in Brownsville, Texas, and he'll give you directions to Los Portales, a legendary home-style beef eatery located a mile across the U.S.-Mexico border in Matamoros.

"You can't beat it," he says, not thinking twice about having to go through customs and cross the Rio Grande to get there. Los Portales, like most restaurants in the twin cities of Matamoros and Brownsville, features a bilingual menu and allows patrons to pay in pesos or dollars.

Los Portales could be in Brownsville or Matamoros or anywhere else along the bicultural *frontera* shared by Mexico and the United States.

Such is the ambiguity pervading life along the divide, where people work on one side and live on the other, are born on one side and die on the other, get sick on one side and see a doctor on the other, attend elementary school on one side and graduate from high school on the other.

"The two cities have more in common with each other than with other areas of their own countries," says Borrego, an economics teacher at Porter High School in Brownsville. "Students look the same over there as here."

It's true. In the Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) about 98 percent of the 48,400 students are Hispanic, mostly of Mexican descent. Beyond appearance, Brownsville also shares another quality with its Third World sister city: poverty. According to a 2006 Census Bureau report, Brownsville is the poorest city of its size in the United States.

For teachers in the Brownsville district, this means that 95 percent of their students are categorized as "economically disadvantaged." Add to that a high percentage of first generation Hispanic students, many from families who can't read or write English, and you end up with 43 percent of district students ranked limited English proficient (LEP) and in need of special services that stretch the district's budget to the limit.

This scenario could wreak havoc on even the best-run, wealthiest school districts in the nation, but it hasn't in Brownsville. On the contrary, BISD has adapted to its environmental challenges and emerged as a model school district for the nation.

Meeting the challenge
Hacer frente al desafío

Parts of BISD's winning plan include paying teachers a competitive salary—starting at $38,000 and going as high as $59,720—working closely with parents, community leaders, and Mexican educators, and building loyalty among its teachers, most of whom are bilingual and routinely turn down lucrative offers to teach in districts across the country.

BISD also created a magnet school system in conjunction with community leaders to help motivate students to stay in school and to fill high-skill local jobs in health care, engineering, criminal justice, education, and business.

So far, it's working.

In 2007, BISD graduates received more than $17 million in college scholarship offers. This year, BISD was chosen by the National Alliance for Hispanic Health and the Merck Institute for Science Education as one of three school districts nationwide that will receive $4 million in college scholarships over the next five years for qualified students to study science.

Roberto Zamora, a Porter graduate who attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and is now a physics

Shop signs in downtown Brownsville (top) resemble their counterparts across the border. An aged metal plaque on the international bridge (right) marks the line separating the United States from Mexico, as **George Borrego** peers toward Matamoros.

PHOTOS: GEORGE TULEY

MANIFIESTOS
EL CORTE INGLES
GRAN MERCADO
DS SUPERCENTER
DCS-186

LA FRONTERA

LIMITE DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS MEXICANOS
BOUNDARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ROPA NUEVA CADA SEMANA
DESDE EL 25% HASTA 50%
217
Casa Banide

graduate student, felt good about his high school math and physics background.

"I expected MIT students to be much more advanced than I was," says Zamora, 23. "I soon learned that the strong foundation I had developed in high school enabled me to hold my own against any problems the professors would throw at me."

Another key to the district's success is community support. In 2006, Brownsville voters approved a $135 million school bond package allowing the district to construct four schools and upgrade existing facilities.

"We have easily passed $235 million [in bonds] in less than 10 years in a community that has some real poverty issues," says Drue Brown, BISD public information officer.

While more than 150 local businesses and organizations participate in the district's adopt-a-school program, parents also do their share.

"Anytime I ask parents for help, they are willing," says Porter Principal Dora Sauceda.

After Porter won the Texas state soccer championship in 2005 in one of the state's most competitive divisions, people associated with the school have become known as the Porter Nation.

"It's not just a title," says Sauceda. "There's a lot of tradition and pride at the school."

The overall showing by BISD in academics, sports, and community involvement has caught the attention of a group of national education experts who visited last spring, evaluating BISD for the Broad Prize for Urban Education.

BISD is among five school districts in the nation that have been chosen as finalists for the Broad, which honors urban school districts that demonstrate the greatest overall performance or improvement while reducing achievement gaps among ethnic groups and between high- and low-income students.

The winner will be announced in October and receive $500,000 in scholarships for graduating seniors.

Consequently, many school festivities and traditions in BISD can be traced to its southern neighbor. For example, Porter boasts a mariachi orchestra, Mexican folkloric dance group, and theater performances that honor Hispanic playwrights.

Students and teachers also participate in Brownsville's Charro Days, a weeklong celebration held each February to honor the city's fellowship with Mexico.

Brownsville is the easternmost city in Texas, with Porter and its feeder schools located just two miles from Matamoros. One of the most impressive exchanges between the sister cities is the annual Binational Conference, a 15-year-old event involving up to 750 public school educators who exchange classroom strategies and stories.

"We learned from [Mexican educators] how to establish basic literacy programs," says Maria Gonzales, BISD Bilingual Education Program Administrator. "They are very interested in our ELL programs."

In addition to similar methodologies, the two education systems are linked because they educate members of the same families, Gonzales says.

"A river divides us, but we're working [in Brownsville] with second and third generations of families originally from Matamoros," she says.

Are we poor?
¿Somos pobres?

For all it is doing right, BISD must still contend with a depressed economy that seems to affect children the most. In a recent newspaper article titled, "Are We Poor? Depends on Your Point of View," the *Brownsville Herald* quoted experts who said "along the U.S.-Mexico border, an impoverished population composed largely of children stretches limited resources."

Educating economically disadvantaged students and students with limited English proficiency is "more expensive than educating English-speaking students who are not poor. Poor students, for a variety of reasons, are likely to arrive at school less prepared to learn. Poor families cannot afford to buy books, computers, and other learning materials," according to *Bordering the Future*, a recent report by the Texas State Comptroller's Office.

In addition to a poor home learning environment, the report states that the "educational level of a child's parents, which tends to be lower for poor families, is one of the greatest predictors of academic success. Because of these factors, the schools must play 'catch up' with such students."

"Most LEP students are in the lower grades," says Gonzales. "If we catch them early, they'll stay with us for the long haul."

For BISD's 54 schools, the biggest challenge of admitting a

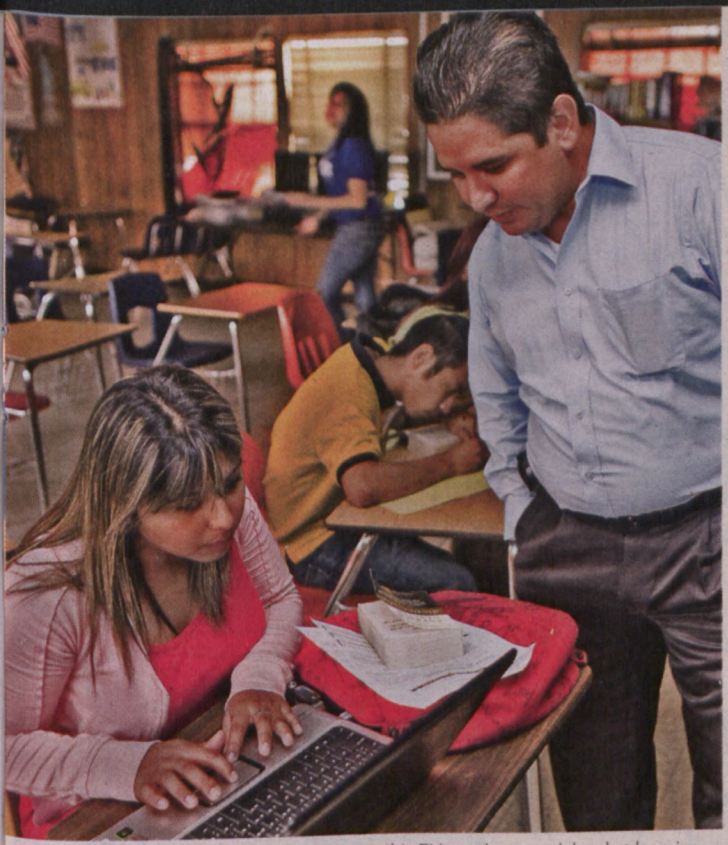
"THE TWO CITIES HAVE MORE IN COMMON OF THEIR OWN COUNTRIES." — George Borrego

Cultural common ground
Terreno común cultural

Borrego attributes some of BISD's success to a teaching and support staff who are home-grown and familiar with the Hispanic culture.

"It helps that teachers look like their students," says Borrego, who has taught at Porter for 18 years.

About 90 percent of the district's 7,000-plus employees are Hispanic. At Porter, there are no Black students and less than a dozen White and Asian students combined. The teaching and support staff are more diverse, including several Black ROTC instructors.



Richard Longoria (Porter '91) says his ELL students work hard at learning English in class, but socially they converse in Spanish.

constant flow of students from Mexico is that many do not even have a basic literacy in Spanish, let alone English. In Mexico, attending school is not free nor a government mandate.

"When you are weak in your native language, it is difficult to make a transition to another language," says Principal Sauceda, who attended school in Mexico before moving to Brownsville as a child.

Saucedo recalls when she was a teacher that a group of middle school students from Mexico weren't familiar with the number 5.

"They didn't know what it was . . . '¿Que es eso (what is that)?'" they would ask her.

Transfer students from Mexico could do well at Porter, says Borrego, if only they practiced their English more.

"They listen to Spanish radio stations and watch Spanish television," he says. "Our biggest battle is getting them to talk English."

Omar Covarrubias, an 18-year-old senior and soccer player at Porter, is greeted by friends in Spanish as he walks the halls during a class break. Covarrubias was born in Monterrey, Mexico, and attended schools in Matamoros up to eighth grade. With little knowledge of English, he transferred to Porter in ninth grade.

"All I could say in English was, 'My name is Omar, how are you?'" says Covarrubias, who wants to study computer science in college. By the start of 11th grade, he understood English well enough to transfer from English Language Learner to regular classes.

Some stay, others leave
Algunos se quedan, otros se van

It's easier for BISD to provide a transformative experience for an ELL student like Covarrubias, who starts and finishes at the same high school. It's much harder to work with turnstile students who change schools several times a year.

At BISD, students whose families migrate to northern states to work at seasonal agricultural jobs often start school late and leave early. About 1,440 BISD students (3 percent) are categorized as "migrant." The border areas of Texas have a 24 percent mobility rate, slightly higher than the state's non-border areas (21 percent).

"They go from school to school during the year, usually arriving in October and leaving in April," says Saucedo. "It's their family's chosen way to earn a living."

She says these students attend 150 days of school "at most," instead of the normal 187.

Consequently, many fall behind and drop out. BISD lists its dropout rate at 14 percent. There are various methods of measuring the dropout rate, including whether or not a district counts students who transfer to alternative education programs, leave the state, or move to Mexico where they may or may not continue their schooling. Other sources list BISD's dropout rate at about 30 percent.

The district's completion rate (which takes into account students who need more than four years to finish high school) is an impressive 84 percent.

Much of this success is attributed to several bilingual programs that place Spanish speakers in LEP classes until they improve their English-speaking skills. For example, Promoting Academic Language Learning (PALL) is a full-immersion program for incoming students who are illiterate in their native language.

Thanks to a highly cooperative relationship with Mexican education officials, BISD has incorporated a program that accepts some academic credits from Mexican schools.

WITH EACH OTHER THAN WITH OTHER AREAS

"This helps to avoid having an 18-year-old freshman," says Richard Longoria, an ELL teacher. "Without some transfer credits it would take them forever to graduate."

ELL students are the fastest-growing population of public school students in the nation. From 1990 to 2001, ELL enrollment has grown by more than 105 percent, compared with only a 12 percent growth of total student enrollment during the same period. Nationwide, the most common language group for ELL students is Spanish at 79 percent; Vietnamese is listed second with only 2 percent, while Chinese and Korean are 1 percent each.

Longoria says his students are well-behaved, hard-working, and get good grades.

"But they don't interact in English," he says. "Socially, they converse in Spanish. But I think that will change in time." nea

Send comments on this story to jrosales@nea.org

PHOTO: GEORGE TULEY

TWO COOKS IN THE KITCHEN

These days, you might be sharing your classroom with another teacher. Can you work effectively together—without spoiling everything?

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

It's a Wednesday morning and history teacher Tracey Wilson listens carefully as her 10th-graders debate the merits of affirmative action. "Nothing should be handed to you! You should work for what you get," a back-row boy says proudly. "The only reason they didn't get into college was because they were Black!" argues another, a Black girl who crosses her arms firmly.

"Isn't there a law that colleges have to have a certain percentile?" a blond student interrupts. "No," Wilson answers simply. And then, from the front row, another hand: "Is Jessica talking about quotas?"

Ah, good question Mrs. Stefanowicz.

There are two teachers in this class at Conard High School in West Hartford, Connecticut. The first, Wilson, is a history teacher of 31 years who designed the course, U.S. History through the African American Experience, to help close the achievement gap in history between White and Black students at her school. The other, Susan Stefanowicz, is a reading teacher who couldn't possibly say no when Wilson approached her at a new teacher orientation and said, "Hey, I think I need you!"

Question: What's one teacher plus one teacher?

Answer: A lot of help.

The "combination plate"—one teacher, typically a grade-level or subject-area specialist, put together with another teacher, usually an English Language Learner (ELL), special-education, or other remediation specialist—is on the menu in more and more schools these days. Called co-teaching, the practice can be beneficial for both teachers and students, if it's cooked up right.

Co-teaching was dreamed up decades ago by school systems that wanted to reduce class sizes. But, as government grants for smaller class sizes dried up, that particular strategy has disappeared, notes Alice Henley, assistant director for development at the State Education Resource Center in Connecticut. Now, it's used most often as an inclusive practice to serve students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in regular classrooms.

"We know it's not the solution for everything. There are some kids, because of their needs, it's not appropriate for them. But that population gets smaller and smaller all the time," Henley says. These days, the district that isn't doing co-teaching is the exception.

Whose room is this?

Second-grade partners Lisa Parisi and Christine Southard represent the cutting-edge of inclusive co-teaching. Watch them in action, in their Long Island, New York, classroom, and there are no seams. Is Parisi the "special educator?" Or is it Southard? Parents have been told, but students don't have a clue.

They share a single email address—as well as all planning periods. They eat lunch together. They've added each other to their Verizon calling plans. It's not even called "Mrs. Parisi's room"—yep, she's the regular ed teacher. Last year, the kids chose a new, more inclusive name: "The South Paris Collaborative."

Theirs is a very successful relationship, evidenced by the improving reading scores of all students in the room—not just students with IEPs. At the beginning of last year, seven or eight students were performing below grade level. By the end, just one remained—and the rest were doing far above expectations on every measure.

"There isn't any child who doesn't benefit from smaller

ILLUSTRATION: DAVID CLARK, PHOTO: MIKE LYDICK

group instruction—and we have the ability to do that easily," Parisi says. "We also have the ability to do different things at the same time. We use a lot of technology here…like VoiceThread [which allows them to record and publish student voices in Web-based projects]. So Christine can be doing that over here, and I can be doing something else over there."

Like the West Hartford duo, Parisi and Southard aren't formally trained co-teachers, which can be helpful, although they have studied co-teaching guru Marilyn Friend's work at the University of North Carolina. (Check out www.marilynfriend.com for more info.) Still, they can point to several reasons for their success—and they're the same ones that Wilson and Stefanowicz cite.

First of all, nobody was forced into this.

Second, not one of the partners thinks that she's really in charge with a handy sous-chef by her side. "This is our classroom. There are two full-size teacher's desks. Not one full-size desk and a student desk by its side," Parisi points out. And in Connecticut, Wilson says, "I have to appreciate that Sue knows what she's doing—and she has to appreciate that I know what I'm doing."

And, they all share equal responsibility for every student in the room.

"There are a lot of co-teachers and regular teachers who believe, 'these are my kids and those are your kids,' and that's the way it is. But that's not co-teaching," Southard says.

Teacher as learner

Back in West Hartford, after more than three decades in the classroom and a recent award as the state history teacher of the year, Wilson still has a rookie's eagerness to try new things—like having a reading teacher by her side. She knew from the start that it would benefit her students. At the very least, they'd have some help getting through their college-level textbook. What she didn't know, she says, is how much she would learn, too.

"I used to write all over the board. I'd cover the board, and I'd expect my students to copy it," Wilson recalls. Now, with Stefanowicz's help, she's become more reflective in her teaching. How exactly should she expect kids to turn information into knowledge? These days, her classroom board often poses a single question, and students learn to listen for the appropriate answers and write them down themselves.

"She's not just teaching the kids, she's teaching me," Wilson marvels.

Send comments on this story to mflannery@nea.org

A winning combination: Connecticut educators **Tracey Wilson** (left) and **Susan Stefanowicz** are improving student learning—and their own—through their co-teaching.

CHALLENGES

What happens when it tastes horrible?

Not every co-teaching arrangement is fabulous. Sometimes somebody eats all the cake—and leaves nothing but crumbs. Sometimes it's like burnt toast. And you just wish you could start fresh.

Last year, teacher-blogger "Ms. Cornelius" (at http://shrewdnessofapes.blogspot.com) wrote about her new partner. "Apparently 'co-teacher' means 'I will show up whenever I feel like it, and when I am there, I will…play on my electronic devices…I guess I should be grateful that this person has not thus far brought in a litter of puppies, which, 'pon my honor, is what one other co-teacher once did to one of my colleagues after being absent for half the week."

Even teachers who love co-teaching, like the ones featured above, have had their share of doozies. The teacher who thinks she knows your subject. Or the one who not-so-secretly believes she's really the boss.

Many teachers will quietly wait out the year. (June is coming, right?) But Alice Henley, a co-teaching trainer, recommends asking for help. "The way we approach it is, 'This is a professional relationship.'" As such, there are professional solutions—like real training—that your department head, administrator, or building rep should be able to help you get. (And a 45-minute sales pitch on how great co-teaching is going to be is not real training.)

"I've seen teams that I didn't think could work it out manage to pull it together successfully, and I think it speaks to their professionalism—and their commitment to children," Henley says.

bulletin board

BEST BOARDS

They're Not Just for Students Anymore

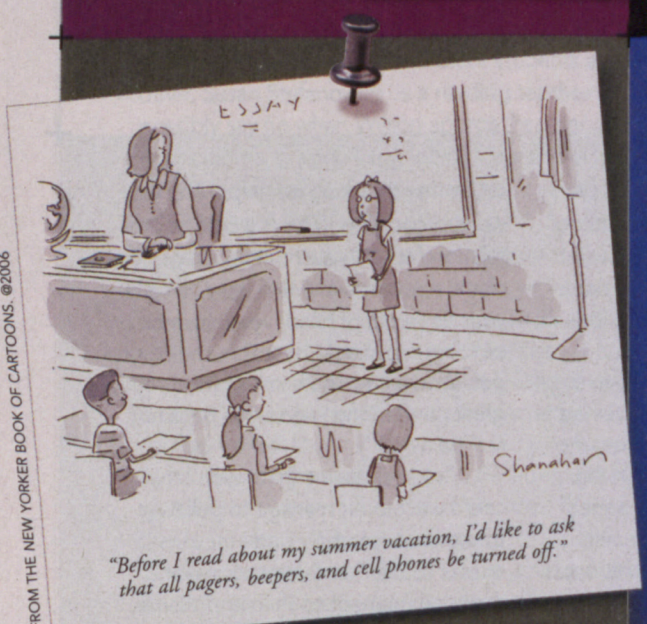
Project display boards are a common sight at schools, but what is unique about a current display at our school is that the boards have been created by teachers. They are part of our second annual exhibition of teacher learning. This year's exhibition is about making educational practices more rigorous, engaging, and meaningful by infusing them with innovative ideas. Through the exhibition, educators continue to seek colleagues' feedback, as viewers are encouraged to comment on each exhibit. Responses have not only spurred the exhibitors to further learning and action, but have stimulated the thinking of exhibition viewers.

JOAN SOBLE AND JENNIFER HOGUE
High school professional development teacher coach and English teacher
Cambridge, Massachusetts

The Hand of Friendship

This board helps students examine the qualities they most appreciate in their friends and identify qualities they have that make them good friends to others. In addition, as a nice twist, we used only leftover scrap papers from the art teacher to show that we can reduce waste and create something beautiful even with leftovers!

ELLEN ST. PIERRE
Guidance counselor
Bridgewater, New Jersey



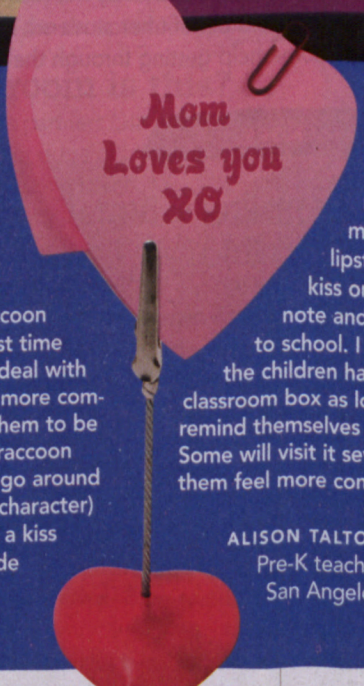
"Before I read about my summer vacation, I'd like to ask that all pagers, beepers, and cell phones be turned off."

FROM THE NEW YORKER BOOK OF CARTOONS. ©2006

TOP TIPS

Laminated Love Notes

One of the neatest things I do on the first day of school is read *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn. It's about a little raccoon going to school for the first time and how he and his mom deal with it. It really makes the kids more comfortable and encourages them to be brave. I read with a small raccoon puppet on my hand, then go around and let Chester (the main character) the puppet give everyone a kiss on their hand. Also, my aide and I trace the students' hands on a sheet of construction paper and then send them home with a note asking a family member to make a lipstick impression of a kiss or write a little love note and then send it back to school. I laminate them and the children have it to keep in their classroom box as long as they need to remind themselves of their loved ones. Some will visit it several times to help them feel more comfortable.



ALISON TALTON
Pre-K teacher
San Angelo, Texas

BULLETIN BOARD TOP: ELLEN ST. PIERRE, BULLETIN BOARD BOTTOM: DEBI MILLIGAN, HEART NOTES: JSTAN, HEART NOTE STAND: DMITRY RUKHLENKO

Afterlife Lessons

As a social studies teacher, I want to emphasize how important the afterlife was to the people of ancient Egypt. I choose one student to act as a deceased pharaoh, and others take turns as the priests, the embalming ritual leaders, the gods, and the mourning citizens of Egypt. With each step, I explain the significance of the ritual. I use handmade materials for organs and whatever costume-like items I have handy. For example, I make the organs and the brain out of construction paper and masks for the gods out of foam. I use plastic cups to represent the canopic jars, baby powder to represent the natron salt, and my black graduation gown is worn by the head priest. The kids absolutely love it. They practically jump out of their chairs to participate. It can be hard for students to really understand the ancient cultures so this lesson is my way of bringing it to life for them.

CHRISTY YASCKO
Sixth-grade social studies teacher
Edison, New Jersey

...From Mummies to Tummies

Following their study of digestion, my students create a GastroWorld theme park. They build a model and develop a portfolio of its attractions that includes illustrations and descriptions of each. Students identify the specific aspects of the featured digestive anatomy or physiology and explain what a park guest could learn from them. Attractions include the Tongue Twister and Alimentary Amphitheater, and at eateries like the Gall Batter, visitors can get a Coca-colon or Mountain Spew.

RICHARD LORD JR.
Middle school biology teacher
Presque Isle, Maine

Personalized Name Tags

The first day of school, I give my students a plain name tag with their name on it in black marker. I ask them to decorate it with things that tell about themselves. It's interesting to see what they add to their tags. Students can find someone who shares the same interests. They can also take surveys with the name tag information and graph their findings.

SARAH PULLIE
Third-grade teacher
Latta, South Carolina

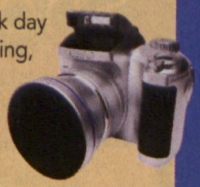
Button Up

To learn students' names quickly (and keep them busy while I attend to first-day housekeeping chores), I use our school buttonmaker. The children all receive pre-cut circles and design their own name buttons, making sure their name is big and bright enough for everyone to see. They have fun using their new school supplies and engage in quiet conversation. I can walk around and memorize names.

WENDY ORZECHOWSKI
Resource teacher
North Brunswick, New Jersey

SEND IT IN

SEND US YOUR SNAPS



Your work day is rewarding, hectic, frustrating, and fantastic all at the same time, right? Well a picture is worth 1,000 words. Send us your favorite snapshot or two from a day in your life as a teacher or support professional. We plan to publish the best later this year in *NEA Today*. Deadline is Jan. 31. Upload your pics at www.nea.org/ref?snaps.

MUMMY: SCOTT ROTHSTEIN, GASTRO WORLD: RICHARD LORD JR., NAME BADGE DECORATED BY KAYLEIGH GLADDEN, CAMERA: STOCKBYTE

Show your true colors.

Ask your faculty, class, team or club to wear pink and raise funds to end breast cancer. It's a simple yet meaningful way to rally your school around a worthwhile cause. Sign up today at passionatelypink.org.

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THIS YEAR'S RESOLUTION: STAYING HEALTHY

You're feeling fit at the start of a new school year. Now keep it that way.

BY GINI KOPECKY WALLACE

Here comes another school year—and another round of all the demands and challenges that can take a toll on your health if you're not careful. Here's how to protect it.

GUARD AGAINST GERMS. "The illnesses we probably see most in educators are things they pick up from children—colds, upper respiratory infections, and gastrointestinal illnesses," says Miriam Alexander, M.D., of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. "So the most important things to emphasize are frequent handwashing, covering coughs, and getting a flu shot—and the first two should also be encouraged in children."

Waterless hand-sanitizers, as well as germ-killing wipes or sprays, also can help clean coughed-on or sneezed-on surfaces, suggests Robert R. Orford, M.D., president of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. That's what he does and, he says, "I rarely have a cold—and I see patients every day." For free classroom germ-fighting posters, go to http://cdc.gov/germstopper/materials.htm.

WATCH YOUR BACK. "I think all educators are at some risk of musculoskeletal injury because they're always setting up classrooms, taking things down, lifting supplies and equipment," says Carol M. Stephenson, of the CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Basic pointers from Stephenson and Alexander: Never try to lift anything while leaning, twisting, or reaching. To lift properly, bend your knees, keep your back straight, tighten your abdominal muscles, hold the object close to your body, and let your thighs do the work.

PHOTO: MEIKO ARQUILLOS

PREVENT ACCIDENTS. Teachers are also susceptible to injuries from "slipping, falling, getting hit by things, walking into open doors, tripping over cords, stuff like that," says Orford. "It's a matter of being aware of your environment and any dangers in the area and of knowing how to set up a projector so it's not a tripping hazard." Working with chemicals and power tools also requires taking basic precautions, he says. "Wearing protective eyewear and a lab coat is important." To order a free CD-ROM of NIOSH's comprehensive "Safety Checklist Program for Schools," or to download materials from it, go to http://cdc.gov/niosh/pubs.

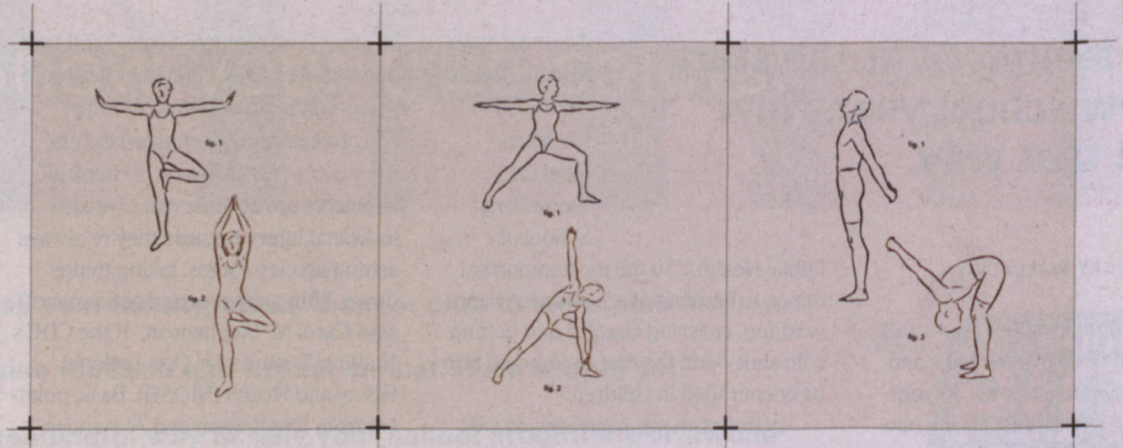
EAT A LITTLE SMARTER. Does your cafeteria post nutritional information about the foods on offer? Talk to your cafeteria manager about ways to make that information available to his or her colleagues and students. Even if your cafeteria menu is heavy on pizza and mac and cheese, you can still take small steps toward eating healthier, says Todd Whitthorne, president of Cooper Concepts, Inc., a division of the Cooper Aerobics Center in Dallas. "Instead of having French fries five days a week, have them three times, or two," says Whitthorne, who frequently addresses groups on taking charge of health. "Or if you have five soft drinks a day, decide you'll have one and replace the others with water."

STRETCH YOUR LEGS. Taking short breaks during pressure-filled days is essential, says Orford. Whitthorne encourages teachers to go for a brisk walk. "One of the best ways to deal with stress is through physical activity," he says. "If you can carve out 30 minutes most days of the week"—in 10-, 15- or 30-minute chunks—"the physical and mental-health benefits are enormous." Ask colleagues to walk with you. "People who exercise together are more consistent and have more fun."

SET LIMITS. Sometimes, the only way to reduce the endless demands placed on educators is "to learn to say no in some situations," says Stephenson. She understands how difficult that can be; she has teachers in her family. "But you have to be realistic about what you can do without wearing yourself out. Seriously. Nothing is more important than your health. You should not have to sacrifice that to be a good teacher."

Let it be. Let it go.

As yoga classes for students in public schools grow in popularity, you might be asking yourself: Hey, what about me? Can't I use a little emotional balance and self-help? (After yet another meeting with test-crazy administrators, one uncomfortable parent conference, and two kids asking why their heads itch, yes, you could use it...) So try these poses, from "The Yoga Deck," illustrated by Olivia H. Miller and published by Chronicle Books. (See www.ohmworks.com or www.chroniclebooks.com for more information.)



Tree
Helps with balance and centering.

Proud Warrior
Increases endurance and stamina.

Yoga Mudra
Loosens shoulders, arms, and spine.

HOW I... Stay Energized!

Where's that Energizer bunny? He's not marching in the ranks of new teachers. The work is exhausting. Some days, you go home ready for bed. On a www.nea.org community forum, a recent poster complained, "I am a new teacher who is tired all the time...in short, I need help!" Fortunately, there are answers. Molly Hastings, a third-grade teacher from Sunnyvale, California, in her third year of teaching, recommends regular exercise. "A workout after a long day [makes] a huge difference," she advises. "Remember, teaching is a 'vacuum' that will suck up any and all of your energy. Stop before you get exhausted and do something that fills you." (For more suggestions, or to add your own, visit www.nea.org/ref?energy.)

2,900

The number of calories in one serving of Outback Steakhouse's Aussie Cheese Fries with Ranch Dressing. Your whole department could split it—and it still wouldn't be healthy!

SOURCE: MEN'S HEALTH.

With 95 cents and a crying stomach, where do you turn?

Sometimes the very best option is a Post-It on the faculty lounge vending machine. "Delivery man: More healthy choices, please!" But, if you're feeling hungry and you just can't wait until he arrives next Tuesday, consider that there are some selections that are healthier than others.

	CHOCOLATE	SALTY SNACKS	BAKED TREATS	PROTEIN POWER	OTHER SWEET STUFF
Avoid	Lots of people listen when **Snickers** asks, "Hungry? Why Wait?" It's the No. 1 seller in vending machines. You might say, "What? It's got peanuts! It's good for me!" Yeah, right. You're eating about a quarter of the daily recommended allowance of saturated fat.	The number-two seller in vending machines is **Doritos.** But they're not a great idea—and not just because you'll leave orange prints on homework papers. Like a lot of snack foods, they're high in calories and saturated fats.	You do know that a serving size is one **Pop-Tart,** right? You might be fooled since they come in pairs. But even if you stop at just one, they're not exactly health food. With 200 calories, you might as well have the chocolate bar!	The **trail mix** looks healthy—with its colorful mix of fruit and nuts—but take a look at the black-and-white numbers. Aagh! Some varieties have more calories and fat than a McDonald's Big Mac!	The **Rice Krispies Treat** is a sneaky one. No fat! How could it possibly be bad for you? With 90 calories, it's not terrible. But it's basically all sugar. No protein. No fiber. Nada.
Best Option	Did you know chocolate contains a chemical called phenylethylamine that triggers feelings of well-being and contentment? Yummm...chocolate... Opt for a **Nestle's Crunch** instead. Total calories? About 200.	You already know what's a better choice, right? Your pal: **The Pretzel.** Oh, pretzel! You are crunchy and salty, and you do not make my hands dirty. How I love you. And best of all? Most varieties have fewer than 100 calories and 1 gram of fat per serving.	Oh no, Mr. Bear! You have no feet anymore! How will you run from my voracious appetite? These little pets are truly your friends. **Animal crackers,** by the numbers: About 125 calories per ounce.	Full of anti-oxidants and protein, a bag of **roasted peanuts** is an excellent choice. They also contain a chemical called resveratrol, which may have anti-aging benefits. (After a day in the classroom, you could use that.)	If you're craving sugar, opt for the **Life-Savers** instead. For one thing, they're usually the cheapest thing in the machine. For another, each one has just 10 calories. Not bad.

CHEESE FRIES: PAUL VISCONTI, PRODUCT SHOTS: GROFF CREATIVE, INC.

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Kathy Cowan

KENT, WASHINGTON

Special education paraeducator
Horsewoman, trail preservationist

You're in the John Wayne Pioneer Wagons and Riders. What is that?
An organization dedicated to preserving trails for future generations to enjoy. The group helps keep part of our American heritage—wagons and horses—alive.

What got you into trail preservation?
The love of the outdoors and horses; wanting to help ensure there will always be someplace for people to enjoy our beautiful state.

How long have you ridden horses?
Almost 30 years.

Favorite horse movie?
More than one—"Seabiscuit," "The Horse Whisperer," "Hidalgo," "Black Beauty," "The Black Stallion."

Favorite tunes to hum while out on the trail?
John Denver. We often sit around after a long day's ride and sing "Rocky Mountain High," "Eagles and Horses," "Ponies," and "Back Home Again."

What's the craziest thing that's happened to you on horseback?
On my very first cross-state ride I was an hour out on the trail when my new horse shied and I went flying off as if from a slingshot! I got a concussion and other minor injuries. At my demand, I rode another six hours to the end of the trail. I now advocate for riding with a helmet.

Does working with horses affect your classroom philosophy?
Yes, both take lots of patience, good communication, trust, and passion.

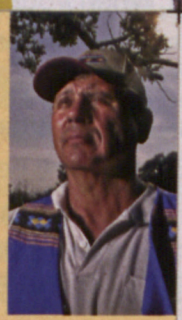
Why did you become an NEA member?
I joined the paraeducators union at its inception to make a difference in our profession.

SHORT TAKES

Terry Spencer

OKLAHOMA

Retired

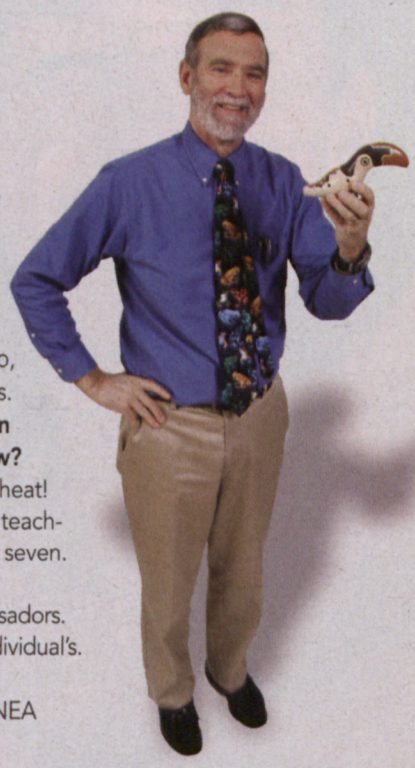


In 1995, Spencer was elected to the General Council of the Seminole Nation, his tribe's highest governing body. Since then, he's grown closer to his heritage than ever. "I'm once again learning new things about our history, and hearing and speaking the Seminole language, which I rarely had the chance to do [before]." In his 29 years of teaching high school, he sponsored the Native American Club. Because of his teaching experience, his tribe tapped him last year to head a committee to explore more effective ways to integrate Native American culture and history into school curricula. "It's a great way to spend retirement."

David Ely

HINESBURG, VERMONT

High school science teacher
Biologist, globally conscious world traveler



You take students on treks to Costa Rica. What do you hope they learn on the trips?
I want them to experience a very different culture and provide community service, like reforestation.

What's the coolest thing you've done on a trip?
Swimming with leatherback turtles last year. Years ago, I went to Costa Rica to help protect their nesting sites.

On a trip to Kenya you gave a school run by women disowned by their tribe a cow. Did you pick the cow?
No, a nice Vermont Holstein wouldn't do well in that heat! Our naturalist guide picked out the cow. Three other teachers also provided funds so we increased their herd to seven.

Any tips for traveling with young people?
Set high expectations and remind them they're ambassadors. Teach them that the group's experience trumps the individual's.

Why did you become an NEA member?
I'm a dedicated professional and Vermont-NEA and NEA represent and advocate for my profession.

WE WANT YOU!

Want to see your story on this page? We're looking for members with unique hobbies or interesting ways of passing their time. Drop us a line about your pursuits outside the classroom at ckopkowski@nea.org. And don't forget to visit www.nea.org/neatoday to vote in September's poll: **What's best about being back?**

PHOTO TOP: STEVE SHELTON; BOTTOM LEFT: BRYAN TERRY; BOTTOM RIGHT: ALDEN PELLETT

QUESTIONS

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HOW DO I PROTECT HER FUTURE?

WHERE CAN I GET HELP TO MANAGE MY BUDGET?

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NEA0908

Democracy In Action

New Resolutions and Resolutions Amended at the 2008 Representative Assembly

The 2008 NEA Representative Assembly adopted the following 12 new resolutions. Amendments by the Representative Assembly to previously adopted NEA resolutions are available online at: www.nea.org/annualmeeting/raaction/080706resolutions.html. Dates in parentheses after each resolution represent the years that the resolution was first adopted and last amended. If only one year is shown, the resolution has not been amended by the Representative Assembly since its adoption.
Send questions and comments on NEA resolutions to pbirkmeier@nea.org.

A-16. School Trust Lands

The National Education Association believes in providing support to states with school trust lands to ensure that they are an important source of funding for public education. The Association supports providing such states with the assistance and guidance necessary to ensure the trust lands and permanent funds generate the maximum revenue possible for public education consistent with the sustainable use of those lands by current and future generations.

The Association also believes that, to maximize educational dollars available to states and ensure a quality education system, revenue from trust lands should be used to supplement, not supplant, revenue for general fund education budgets. (2008)

A-36. District Consolidation/Deconsolidation

The National Education Association believes that any proposal that calls for the consolidation/deconsolidation of districts should be brought forth by locally elected school boards of affected districts.

The Association also believes that district consolidation/deconsolidation must employ a democratic process that meaningfully involves local associations and other stakeholders in all decision-making.

The Association further believes that if districts undergo consolidation/deconsolidation, all education employees in the new district(s) should be treated equitably with no reduction in the salary, benefits, protections, bargaining rights, or due process rights of the employees. Employees of these public school districts should remain bargaining unit members of local, state, and national affiliates. (2008)

B-5. Dropout Prevention

The National Education Association believes that high school graduation must be a federal, state, and local priority.

The Association also believes that education systems should collaborate with parents/guardians and the broader community. Together, they should provide intervention, social/emotional and legal support, academic assistance, and career programs to ensure that pre-K through 12 students remain in school through the completion of high school graduation requirements. (2008)

B-6. Expanding Student Graduation and Promotion Options

The National Education Association believes that public high schools should expand graduation and promotion options for students and create partnerships with colleges, alternative schools, and vocational, career, and technical programs.

The Association also believes that states and local school districts should employ multiple options in determining graduation and promotion requirements.

The Association further believes that these options serve as valid indicators of readiness for postsecondary opportunities. (2008)

B-17. Micronesian Education

The National Education Association recognizes that the complex and diverse needs of Micronesian children require the direct involvement of Micronesian island educators, parents/guardians, and community leaders in the development of programs that meet the cultural, language, and learning characteristics of these children.

The Association believes in efforts that provide for—

a. Programs establishing appropriate educational opportunities for Micronesian students
b. Development of curriculum and instructional materials and programs, including English proficiency programs that are designed to meet the language needs of Micronesian students
c. Development of relationship-building and culturally cohesive frameworks designed to meet the needs of Micronesians in the school, home, and work environment
d. The recruitment, training, and employment of Micronesian island educators as role models, bilingual teachers, counselors, and other professional and support staff to meet the needs of Micronesian students
e. Involvement of Micronesian educators in developing educational materials for classroom instruction, as well as the dissemination of information and programs that include the values, heritage, language, culture, and history of Micronesians
f. Assistance to affiliates in meeting the educational needs of Micronesian students
g. Opportunities for higher education for all Micronesian students through direct and indirect governmental assistance in graduate and undergraduate programs.

The Association encourages opportunities to preserve, promote, and perpetuate Micronesian heritage and culture. (2008)

B-54. Journalism Education

The National Education Association believes that freedom of speech and press are fundamental principles in our democratic society granted by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, and these freedoms provide all people, including students, with the right to engage in robust and uninhibited discussion of issues in student media. (2008)

B-62. Individual Learning, Growth, and Development

The National Education Association believes that learners grow and develop at different rates and in different ways. Individual learning progresses in a highly complex manner that includes periods of rapid growth and periods of intellectual consolidation.

The Association also believes that human beings learn best in caring, challenging, and inclusive environments that support and engage each learner. Individual students require learning opportunities that are differentiated and responsive to their needs, interests, and learning styles.

The Association further believes in the use of developmentally appropriate instructional practices. Grade level labels do not accurately define our students. Such labels misinterpret student learning as primarily linear, sequential, and easily standardized. (2008)

F-14. Contingent Faculty and Professional Staff Protection

The National Education Association actively supports the creation of new full-time faculty positions within colleges, universities, and community colleges. The excessive use of academic appointments on contingent, temporary, non-tenure track, and/or multiple long-term contracts undermines academic and intellectual freedom, tenure, the governance structure, and education quality. Contingents should be treated no differently than full-time, tenure, or permanent faculty or professional staff for purposes of employment conditions, including eligibility to collectively bargain.

Equitable treatment of contingent faculty must include—

a. Salary and benefits proportionate (pro rata pay and benefits) to their work, including course preparation time, office hours, committee assignments and involvement in governance
b. Equal treatment with tenure system faculty regarding issues of resource allocation, including office space, access to phone and computer equipment, library facilities, secretarial support, and required professional development
c. The conversion of contingent positions to full-time tenure positions, and the faculty in these positions offered the opportunity to convert into full-time tenure-track faculty. Contingents seeking tenure-track positions should have the opportunity to ensure their qualifications are competitive for the new positions. Institutions in collaboration with exclusive representation or appropriate governance procedures must develop and implement an appropriate evaluation system for contingents.

The Association further believes that the overreliance on contingent faculty and professional staff in response to government underfunding or other fiscal crises is detrimental to the institution, the employees, and the students. Equitable policies and practices must be in place so contingents can function as professionals in institutions of higher education. (2008)

I-8. Sustainability

The National Education Association believes that sustainability is the understanding of the connections between, and achieving balance among, the economic, social, and environmental aspects of a community, and that sustainability requires assessing entire systems and recognizing how they must operate in order to preserve the natural systems that support our life on earth.

The Association also believes that sustainability is related to the quality of life in a community and whether the economic, social, and environmental systems that make up a community are providing a healthy, productive, and meaningful life for all community residents, present and future.

The Association further believes that establishing, tracking, and managing sustainability goals will ensure continuous progress toward sustainability, and that sustainable practices are cost-effective, provide a workforce that understands sustainability, build stronger communities, protect student and staff health, support academic success, prepare today's students to be wise leaders tomorrow, and protect our ecosystems. (2008)

I-31. César Chávez Day

The National Education Association believes that César Chávez Day should be a state holiday in every state to focus on the importance of human relations. The Association encourages the observance of this day to promote reflection and action for social justice. (2008)

I-48. Civility in Public Discourse

The National Education Association believes that American institutions in both the public and private sectors should foster a culture that promotes universal respect for all people and that strongly discourages demeaning characterizations of people in relation to their race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, gender identification, size, or disability. (2008)

I-51. Right of Redress for Descendants of Slavery

The National Education Association believes that both the nation's decision to allow and the acceptance of ownership of labor were morally flawed at their inception and that a formal apology is long overdue.

The Association also believes that all descendants of those who served in bondage possess just cause to seek redress from the federal government for past injustices that have contributed to the institutional racism that exists until this day. (2008)

59 is the average retirement age for NEA members.

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NEA0908

resources

53 **Grants & Awards** Check out the new award for custodians from the NEA Health Information Network.

56 **Take Note** Character Counts! Week is October 19–25—do you have what it takes?

57 **Diversity Calendar** September 15–October 15 is Hispanic Heritage Month.

58 **In Print** A vibrant, bilingual picture book explores the special bond among cousins in a large family.

59 **Election 2008: A Teachable Moment** This year's historic presidential election offers a golden opportunity to introduce students to American democracy.

60 **Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits** Jenny Craig has a special offer for members.

61 **On the Web** A new site allows users to explore the universe in breathtaking close-up, right from the desktop.

62 **NEA's Read Across America** Order your 2008-09 Resource Calendar now!

62 **Books by NEA Members** A sensitive story about an 11-year-old abuse victim may aid school staff in helping students who face this frightening situation.

Deadline Approaching for the NEA Foundation's October 2008 Grant Review

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE BY OCTOBER 15, 2008, FOR BOTH THE *STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRANTS* AND THE *LEARNING & LEADERSHIP GRANTS*

THE NEA FOUNDATION
www.neafoundation.org

Need a grant? Since 1999, The NEA Foundation has awarded close to 2,000 individual grants to educators and teams of educators totaling over $5.9 million. There are two types:

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GRANTS are $5,000 awards that promote classroom innovation to engage students in critical thinking and deepen their knowledge of standards-based subject matter.

LEARNING & LEADERSHIP GRANTS are $5,000 awards (for teams of educators) and $2,000 awards (for individuals) that support high-quality professional development opportunities, such as summer institutes, action research, collegial study, lesson study, and mentoring.

Applications are accepted throughout the year and are reviewed three times a year, beginning on February 1, June 1, and October 15.

For the current cycle, recipients will be notified by January 15, 2009. Grants fund activities for 12 months from the award date. All practicing K–12 public school teachers, education support professionals, and higher education faculty and staff at public colleges and universities are encouraged to apply. Visit **www.neafoundation.org** today for more information, including guidelines and applications, or call **(202) 822-7840**.

CUSTODIAN AWARD RECOGNIZES SCHOOL CLEANLINESS AND HEALTH

The NEA Health Information Network (NEA HIN), in partnership with the Soap and Detergent Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is creating a national custodian awards program, the C.L.E.A.N. Award (Custodial Leaders for Environmental Advocacy Nationwide).

The C.L.E.A.N. Award recognizes the contributions that custodians make to public health in their schools, communities, and their profession. The award will be presented to a school custodian who demonstrates outstanding leadership in school cleanliness and who reflects the contributions that education support professionals (ESPs) make to public health.

Five awards will be presented (one top recipient and four runners-up) at the 2009 NEA National ESP Conference in Orlando, Florida. Prizes include: an all-expenses-paid trip to the National ESP Conference; a cash award; a year's worth of NEA dues; and more! Individuals are eligible to apply beginning September 1. **December 10, 2008**, is the deadline to apply.

For information, contact Jennie Young at **jyoung@nea.org** or **(202) 822-7481**.

Custodial Leaders for Environmental Advocacy Nationwide
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Arts teachers working in specialized public arts high schools and arts-focused magnet and charter high schools can apply for 20 grants of up to $5,500, with a complementary grant of $1,500 provided to each Fellow's school for related activities.

Complete program information is available at **www.surdna.org/artsteachersfellowship**. You must file a letter of intent to apply by **November 14, 2008**.

NEA URBAN GRANTS PROGRAM

Since 1985, the National Education Association's Urban Grants Program has supported local NEA affiliates in the development of education reform leadership programs for pre-K, K–12, and graduate school faculty and education support professionals. Twenty-five Urban Grants in the amount of $5,000 each are awarded annually to NEA local affiliates to help support these programs.

NEA Constituent Relations administers the program and looks for proposals that contribute to providing a great public school for every child by reflecting some aspect of NEA's strategic priorities.

NEA local affiliates of 500 members or more who are listed with the NEA membership office, or the largest local NEA affiliate of any state, regardless of membership number, are eligible to apply.

Applicants must submit a proposal postmarked no later than **September 30, 2008**, to NEA Constituent Relations/NCUEA Office, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC, 20036. The Constituent Relations staff will correspond with applicants, as well as their respective state Association and regional offices, notifying them of receipt of the proposal.

More information is available at **www.nea.org/ncueahome/urbangrants.html**.

TAKE LEARNING BEYOND THE BUILDING

Target will award 5,000 field trip grants up to $800 each during the 2008-09 school year. Educators can choose their own field trip and use the grants to cover transportation costs, entry fees, and supplies and resource materials.

Grants are open to school staff employed by a K–12 public, private, or charter school in the United States. Criteria for selection include: the description of the field trip and its objectives; benefits to students; the tie-in to the school curriculum; the number of students who will be impacted; and the proposed use of funds.

Registration and applications will be available at **www.target.com/teachers** through **November 1, 2008**.

GIFT CARDS FOR TECHNOLOGY

Best Buy believes that technology can excite and engage students, creating a more valuable educational experience. Since 2004, the Best Buy Teach Award program has awarded nearly $17 million to more than 6,000 K–12 schools in the form of gift cards that schools can use to purchase additional technology to expand or enhance current programs.

Awards range from $1,000 to $5,000 based on specific school needs, as well as $10,000 for up to 15 ninth-grade programs. K–12 public, private, magnet, charter, and parochial schools located in the United States or Puerto Rico are eligible. Recipients demonstrate that their students use technology in interactive and engaging ways.

More information and applications are available at **www.bestbuy.com/teach**. All applications must be completed and submitted online by **October 12, 2008**.

BUBBLE WRAP COMPETITION FOR YOUNG INVENTORS

Sponsored by Sealed Air Corporation and administered by the National Museum of Education, this contest encourages students to demonstrate creativity and ingenuity by creating an invention that incorporates Bubble Wrap cushioning.

Three finalists will win a three-day trip to New York City, where the grand prize winner will be announced on Bubble Wrap Appreciation Day, January 26, 2009. The grand prize winner will receive a $10,000 savings bond, while the second and third place winners will receive $5,000 and $3,000, respectively, in savings bonds. The teacher/mentor of each finalist will receive a $500 gift card.

The deadline for entries is 6 p.m. EST, **November 3, 2008**. Visit **www.nmoe.org/bubblewrap** for more information, a complete list of requirements, and to apply. You can also meet previous contest winners and view their inventions.

2008–09 SIEMENS COMPETITION

The Siemens Competition seeks to promote excellence by encouraging students to undertake individual or team research projects in the fields of math, science, or technology.

Students can compete as individuals or as a member of a team. Individual projects promote independent research; team projects foster collaborative research efforts as well as individual contributions to the cooperative endeavor. Scholarships for winning projects range from $1,000 to $100,000.

The competition is open to high school students who are citizens or permanent residents (green card holders) of the United States. The submission deadline is 5 p.m. EST, **October 1, 2008**. Visit **www.collegeboard.com/siemens** for more information.

PHOTO: STOCK.XCHNG

Take Note

INTERESTED IN ASSOCIATION WORK? APPLY TO THE 2009 NEA AFFIRMATIVE ACTION UNISERV INTERN PROGRAM

As part of an ongoing commitment to state and local affiliates, NEA is seeking potential eligible candidates for the 2009 UniServ Intern Program.

Individuals who successfully complete the 4-1/2 week training program and the three-month field experience will be certified by NEA as eligible for UniServ staff work in an NEA state or local affiliate.

All individuals must be committed to relocating for the three-month field experience.

Eligible applicants must be or have the following:

ETHNIC minority or female as designated by the U.S. Census

ACTIVE NEA member for at least one year

BASIC knowledge and understanding of the Association at the local/state level

COMMITTED to pursuing UniServ staff employment upon successful completion of the program

EXCELLENT interpersonal skills

WILLINGNESS to participate in intensive training

WILLINGNESS to resign all Association positions at the local, state, and national level

WILLINGNESS to work in a learning environment during day and evening hours and learn new skills and attitudes.

Potential applicants should send a letter of interest to:
Denard Earl
UniServ Intern Program, NEA Affiliate Learning and Effectiveness
1201 16th St. NW
Washington DC, 20036

All letters of interest must be received at NEA by **December 8, 2008**, via U.S. Mail or Federal Express. Faxed copies will not be accepted, nor will letters received after the deadline. You will then receive an application packet, which must be completed and returned by **January 31, 2009**. Questions? Call Denard Earl at (202) 822-7620.

Note: The NEA does not guarantee employment of UniServ staff; employment is a state/local decision.

NATIONAL PUNCTUATION DAY—SEPTEMBER 24

On Dashes & Commas & Colons & Brackets! Do your students need to work on their punctuation? Former newspaperman Jeff Rubin thinks we all need to. In fact, he created National Punctuation Day to remind people of the importance of punctuation.

For ideas on teaching punctuation to your elementary school students, check out Punctuation Playtime at **www.punctuationplaytime.com**, which has resources for free and for purchase. (Be sure to listen to the *Punctuation Rap*, both rap and blues versions).

For definitions and ideas for older students, see the electronic grammar course on the HyperGrammar Web site from the University of Ottawa Writing Centre. Go to **www.arts.uottawa.ca/writcent/hypergrammar**.

September—Gynecological Cancer Month

THE NEA HEALTH INFORMATION NETWORK (NEA HIN) IS COMMITTED TO RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT THE PREVENTION OF GYNECOLOGICAL CANCERS, INCLUDING CERVICAL CANCER.

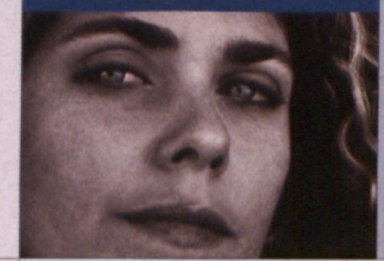


PHOTO: STOCK.XCHNG

IN RECOGNITION OF GYNECOLOGICAL CANCER MONTH, NEA HIN RECOMMENDS THAT YOU TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO PROTECT YOUR HEALTH AND THE HEALTH OF THOSE YOU CARE ABOUT.

Get the Facts. NEA HIN and several partner organizations have produced free resources to help you make informed decisions about preventing, detecting, or treating gynecologic cancers:

OUR NEW BOOKLET, *Talking About Cervical Cancer Prevention*, is available for download at **www.neahin.org** or contact Jamie Ekatomatis at jekatomatis@nea.org to request copies.

ACTRESS FRAN DRESCHER, herself a uterine cancer survivor, has launched Cancer Schmancer at **www.cancerschmancer.org**. Her efforts aim to ensure that all women's cancers are diagnosed in stage one, when most curable.

DEVELOPED BY the Gynecological Cancer Foundation for women and their families, the Women's Cancer Network helps you assess your risk, provides background information, and offers support to cancer survivors. Go to **www.wcn.org**.

Make an Appointment. It is important for you to get regular gynecologic exams, which should include a pelvic exam, Pap test, breast exam, and, if you are over 30, an HPV (human papillomavirus) test. Annual mammograms are recommended for women starting at age 40. Also, talk to your doctor about the HPV vaccine, available for girls and young women ages 9–26.

Spread the Word. NEA HIN has developed a series of new lesson plans on adolescent vaccination and sexual health for teachers of middle and high school classes in Health, Life Science, and History. HPV, the leading cause of cervical cancer, is highly preventable through vaccination before the onset of sexual activity. Find the *Teen Sexual Health and Vaccine Education* lesson plans online at **www.neahin.org**, or for more information, contact Jamie Ekatomatis with the NEA Health Information Network at jekatomatis@nea.org.

UP ON THE ROOF

The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) has announced the availability of *The Roof is Growing!*, an educational resource for middle school students and teachers about green roofs and their environmental benefits. This free resource includes a lesson plan, workbook, and online interactive program designed to engage students in learning how green roofs cool cities, clean the air, create habitats, and control stormwater.

A green roof replaces traditional roofing with a living environment of plants and soil. Among many benefits, green roofs reduce the amount of water that flows into sewer systems. The plants store excess carbon from the atmosphere and lower radiant heat in the summer. Additionally, green roofs provide extra insulation to buildings and last two or three times longer than traditional roofs.

To learn more, visit **www.asla.org/greenroof**.

• TEACHING TOLERANCE PRESENTS •

A New Documentary Film
about the Delano Strike and Grape Boycott
Led by César Chávez and Dolores Huerta

FREE TO SCHOOLS!

GRADES 7 AND UP
Teacher's guide supports standards for social studies and language arts

Order your FREE copy at
www.teachingtolerance.org/lacausa

TEACHING TOLERANCE
A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

CHARACTER COUNTS! WEEK IS OCTOBER 19–25

Mark your calendar—participating in Character Counts! Week is a powerful way to build community around enduring common values and connect to communities worldwide doing the same thing.

With online registration you can access free resources, including lesson plans that reinforce the Six Pillars of Character of the CC! program; critical thinking writing prompts; ideas for parents collaborating with educators; handouts that combine language arts, critical thinking, and art; and mini-posters featuring inspiring quotations.

To register, visit **http://charactercounts.org/programs/ccweek/index.php**.

NEED MONEY TO FUND A CLASSROOM PROJECT?

DonorsChoose.org is a not-for-profit Web site where public school teachers submit ideas for experiences and materials that their students need in order to learn.

Individuals, who are called "citizen philanthropists," can search the Web site's thousands of proposals, learn about classroom needs, and choose projects to fund. Donors receive a feedback package of photographs, student thank-you notes, and a teacher impact letter showing that their gift was spent as directed.

A fulfillment fee of 25 percent of the project's cost helps to cover administrative operations, however, 90 percent of donation dollars include the fulfillment fee, and high-poverty schools can receive "scholarships" that reduce their fee to 15 or 20 percent of project costs.

To date, DonorsChoose.org has delivered more than $18 million in resources to fund more than 56,000 projects, and nearly 60,000 individuals have become citizen philanthropists in support of their local public schools.

For more information and to submit a proposal, visit **www.donorschoose.org**.

Diversity Calendar

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER—LIBRARY CARD SIGN-UP MONTH
They may have paper and pens, but if your students don't have library cards, they're not fully equipped to learn. And it's free!

SEPTEMBER 1—LABOR DAY
Begun in New York by labor leader Peter McGuire to honor the American worker, as well as acknowledge the value and dignity of work and its role in American life, Congress made the observance a federal holiday in 1894.

SEPTEMBER 1—RAMADAN BEGINS
Muslims worldwide fast and honor the revelation of the *Qur'an* to Muhammad during this Islamic holy month, ending September 30.

SEPTEMBER 2—BIRTHDAY OF CHRISTA MCAULIFFE
Teacher and NEA member McAuliffe (1948–1986) was America's first "ordinary citizen" in space. Along with six other crew members, she perished in 1986 on board the Space Shuttle *Challenger*.

SEPTEMBER 8—INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY
Celebrated since 1965, when it was established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), this event focuses on reading from a global perspective. Visit www.nifl.gov/nifl/literacy_day/ild_current.html to download a kit and activity ideas.

SEPTEMBER 11—PATRIOT DAY
This is a day to honor victims who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks in 2001. Flags are flown at half-mast and displayed from individual American homes, at the White House, and on all U.S. government buildings and establishments, at home and abroad.

SEPTEMBER 15–OCTOBER 15—HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH
In 1988, this event became a month-long celebration of Hispanic culture and tradition. Visit www.reaadwritethink.org/CALENDAR/calendar_day.asp?id=293 to find lesson plans and activity ideas.

SEPTEMBER 15–16—MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE DAYS
These days recall the beginning in 1810 of Mexico's struggle for independence from Spain. Each year, the president of Mexico rings the bells of the National Palace in Mexico City.

SEPTEMBER 17—CONSTITUTION DAY
On September 17, 1787, the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention met to sign the Constitution of the United States of America. Visit www.annenbergclassroom.org/Chapter.aspx?Id=61.

SEPTEMBER 21—INDEPENDENCE DAY, ARMENIA
On this day, Armenians commemorate their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991—a new chapter in Armenia's more than 3,000-year history.

SEPTEMBER 22—AUTUMNAL EQUINOX
The fall equinox begins autumn in the northern hemisphere—the moment when the sun appears to cross the celestial equator and day and night are of approximately equal length. In Japan, it is a day to honor ancestors and remember the dead.

SEPTEMBER 29—ROSH HASHANAH
The Jewish New Year, also known as the Days of Renewed Responsibility, begins at sunset and ends at nightfall on October 1. The event is marked by solemn religious observances.

Yo Picasso, self portrait by Pablo Picasso, c. 1901

For Hispanic Heritage Month, learn about influential Hispanic artists who have had a lasting impact on the history of art.

Pablo Picasso www.arthistoryarchive.com/arthistory/cubism/Pablo-Picasso.html

Diego Rivera www.diegorivera.com/index.php

Francisco de Goya www.nga.gov/collection/gallery/gg52/gg52-main1.html

Frida Kahlo www.fridakahlo.com

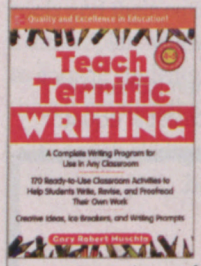
Fernando Botero www.boteroinvenice.com/ing/home.php

Salvador Dalí www.salvadordalimuseum.org

Want more? The Incredible Art Department has a page of links to Mexican, Latin American, and other Hispanic art sites that include museums (real and virtual), galleries, and private art studios—as well as lesson plans—that focus on traditional and contemporary Hispanic art. Go to www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/middle/mexico.htm.

In Print

HELPING YOUNG WRITERS GROW

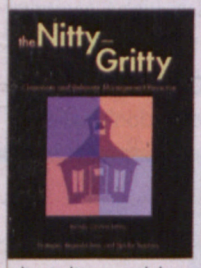


If you're looking for supplemental material for your writing program or are in search of practical exercises to boost your students' proofreading skills, try *Teach Terrific Writing, Grades 4–5* by Gary Robert Muschla. Versatile enough to adapt to existing programs, the activities in this book will help students identify, focus, and develop ideas for writing and hone their ability to revise and proof their own work. Includes 170 reproducible worksheets, writing exercises for students of varying ability, and an answer key and at-a-glance teacher support materials. 237 pp. $19.95 from McGraw-Hill. Go to www.books.mcgraw-hill.com.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE LETTER B, FOR BÚFALO

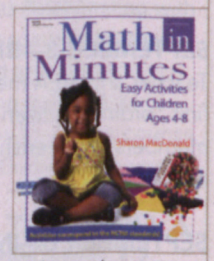
Brilliant colors, whimsical, hand-made folk art, and bilingual text make *ABeCedarios, Mexican Folk Art ABCs in English and Spanish* by Cynthia Weill and K.B. Basseches a real standout. Each letter in this abecedarium is illustrated with folk art animals fashioned by Moisés and Armando Jiménez, famed carvers from Oaxaca, Mexico. Their distinctive style is a perfect match for the saturated background colors and spare text. 32 pp. $14.95 from Cinco Puntos Press. Go to www.cincopuntos.com.

A MANUAL FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT



Written to help conquer classroom frustrations, *The Nitty Gritty Classroom and Behavior Management Resource* by Belinda Christine Tetteris provides insight on techniques used by effective teachers, addressing topics such as planning for the first week of school, designing innovative classroom layouts, establishing learning centers, creating a class library, preventing discipline problems through behavior management strategies, and establishing positive home-school connections, along with varieties of assessments, record-keeping techniques, differentiated learning, and more. 225 pp. $29.95 from Rowman & Littlefield Education. Go to www.rowmaneducation.com.

MATH IS SOMETHING YOU *DO*



Proceeding from the premise that math is not desk work for young children, the 150 fun, simple activities in *Math in Minutes, Easy Activities for Children Ages 4–8* by Sharon MacDonald introduce children to early math concepts by capitalizing on their developmental strengths. Each chapter begins with easy tasks and progresses to the more difficult, and children who want an extra challenge can tackle "Take It Up a Level," available at the end of many sections. All activities use materials found in any classroom and correlate with National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards. 208 pp. $19.95 from Gryphon House, Inc. Go to www.gryphonhouse.com.

CHEAPER BY THE COUSIN

Cousins are friends and rivals, funny and frustrating, but most important, cousins are family. With spare text in both English and Spanish, *We Are Cousins/Somos primos* by/por Diane Gonzales Bertrand celebrates the joy of this special family bond. From the moment these kids get together, the fun (and chaos) begins! Vibrant illustrations portray lifelong bonds begun in childhood.

Ages 2–5. 32 pp. $15.95 from Piñata Books, Arte Público Press. Go to www.artepublicopress.com

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More online at http://online.tc.columbia.edu/oice or contact: Seynabou Diop at The Center for Technology & School Change 212.678.4189 or Diop@tc.edu

Teaching Research Spotlight

If you're interested in what the research says about your profession, visit NEA's online venue highlighting professional research on best practices in educational issues.

September's focus is on
Year-Round Education

Learn more at www.nea.org/ref?sepresearch

I'm participating in key decisions...
"Contributing to The NEA Fund for Children & Public Education is an everyday thing with me because I give through payroll deduction. I have the confidence and pride of knowing that every day I'm participating in key decisions affecting public education and my job."
Kevin Ericson
9-12 Special Education Teacher
Nevada Community Schools
Nevada, Iowa
THE NEA FUND
For Children & Public Education
Contribute to The NEA Fund for Children & Public Education. Go to www.neafund.org.

Election 2008: A Teachable Moment

WHETHER YOU'RE DECIDED OR UNDECIDED, LEFT OR RIGHT, BLUE OR RED (OR A DIFFERENT SHADE ALTOGETHER), THIS YEAR'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IS A PRICELESS OPPORTUNITY TO TEACH THE VALUE OF CITIZENSHIP AND HOW OUR GOVERNMENT WORKS. HERE ARE RESOURCES TO HELP.

HARNESSING THE POLITICAL POWER OF YOUTH

ServiceVote is a campaign to engage young people in the political process, beginning with voting. The program challenges youth to think critically about how they can affect issues by getting involved in the political process, and provides opportunities to participate in the presidential election. The Web site features news and information on various races, the presidential candidates, and defining issues, as well as opportunities for peer interaction through a discussion forum where youth can post videos, images, and audio files. Help youth get involved at **www.servicevote.org**.

PRACTICE POLITICAL POWER—VOTE IN A MOCK ELECTION

Dating from 1980, the The National Student/Parent Mock Election (NSPME) is one of the nation's oldest, largest, and most successful voter education projects. This year, Google is providing teachers with an online, customizable Mock Election Toolkit, using YouTube and tools like Google News and Google Maps, to help students learn about the 2008 presidential election. The Mock Election will take place on October 30, five days before the rest of America votes in the November election. Real time results will be displayed on a Google Map. All American students (and parents and educators) are invited to participate at no cost. For more information and to register, go to **www.nationalmockelection.org**.

CIVICS AND U.S. GOVERNMENT BROUGHT TO LIFE

Engage middle and high school students with C-SPAN Classroom. Tapping the vast resources of C-SPAN's archives and ongoing programming for teachers, this free Web site uses state and national standards-based video content, lesson plans, and primary source materials to bring civics and government to life. Developed with a team of social studies teachers, the site features hundreds of video clips and related classroom materials organized into six major topic areas: principles of government, U.S. Constitution, legislative branch, executive branch, judicial branch, and political participation. Go to **www.c-spanclassroom.org**.

HEY, IT'S YOUR DEMOCRACY, TOO!

Want to know more about issues in government, but tired of political hype? Citizen Joe is a nonprofit Web site that offers information regarding current controversies and debates via thoughtful, non-partisan guides, created by people with political views ranging from liberal to conservative. The site addresses a wide range of topics, from education to environmental concerns and national security. It's also easy to navigate and provides plenty of links for those who get hooked. Go to **www.citizenjoe.org**.

PHOTO TOP LEFT: GETTY IMAGES; ILLUSTRATION: STOCK.XCHNG

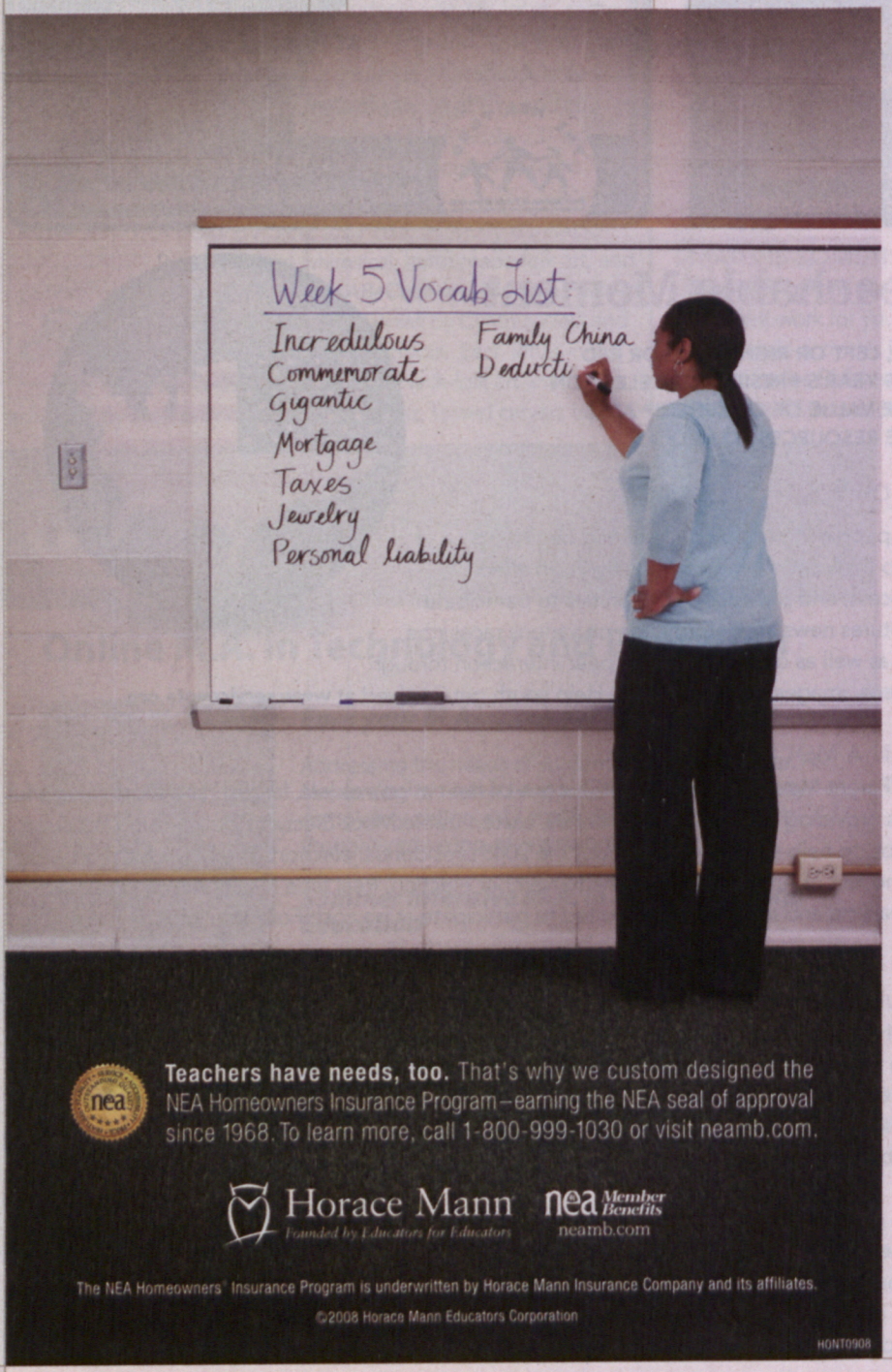
Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

BRAND NEW MEMBERS, TAKE NOTICE!

THE NEA MEMBERS INSURANCE TRUST® is welcoming new members in the 2008-09 school year with $15,000 of term life insurance *at no cost*. **NEA Introductory Term Life Insurance℠** coverage starts on your effective date of membership and continues for 12 months. At that time, you may be eligible to extend the term of coverage at great members-only rates. No medical exam is required.

Call **1 (800) 637-4636** to learn more.

Speaking of insurance: The tried and true NEA DUES-TAB® Insurance Program has a new name! The **NEA Complimentary Life Insurance℠ Program** still offers eligible members *free* life and AD&D insurance coverage based on membership category and years of membership. Make sure you register or update your beneficiaries at **www.neamb.com/insurance/linall.jsp**.


Week 5 Vocab List:
Incredulous
Commemorate
Gigantic
Mortgage
Taxes
Jewelry
Personal liability
Family China
Deducti
Teachers have needs, too. That's why we custom designed the NEA Homeowners Insurance Program—earning the NEA seal of approval since 1968. To learn more, call 1-800-999-1030 or visit neamb.com.
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The NEA Homeowners® Insurance Program is underwritten by Horace Mann Insurance Company and its affiliates.
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HONT0908

ENJOY 'DOUBLE DISCOUNT' SAVINGS

THE NEA CLASSROOM SUPERSTORE is your source for classroom supplies and educational resources.

Through September 19, NEA members save 20 percent—double the regular discount—**on orders over $49**, plus get free shipping on in-stock items!

Visit **www.classroomdirect.com/neamb** and be sure to enter the special promo code **067_NEA20** at checkout.

JENNY CRAIG HAS A SPECIAL OFFER FOR NEA MEMBERS!

JOIN JENNY CRAIG and receive a *free* 30-Day Program or 25 percent off the 6-Month Program. Or get 20 percent off the Jenny Rewards 1-Year Program, which includes food discounts based on active participation. (Plus the cost of food and shipping. Program discounts apply to membership fee only.) Weekly one-on-one consultations and 24/7 support can help you reach your weight loss goals.

Visit **www.neamb.com/jennycraig** and print a coupon to bring to your first consultation.

PHOTO: STOCK.XCHNG

On the Web

FREE DIGITAL WORKSHOPS SHARE 'WHAT WORKS'

Doing What Works (DWW), a new Web site sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, is dedicated to helping educators identify and make use of effective teaching practices that are supported by rigorous research. Current offerings include digital workshops that explore examples of "what works" in early childhood education, English language learning, and math and science. Future topics will focus on cognition and learning, high school reform, and literacy. For more information, visit **www.dww.ed.gov**.

HAVE A FEW MINUTES? VISIT THE MILKY WAY

Or maybe *Eta Carinae*, a star 100 times more massive than the sun and 7,500 light-years away. You and your students will love Microsoft's new WorldWide Telescope (WWT)—a Web 2.0 visualization software environment that enables your computer to function as a virtual telescope, bringing together imagery from ground and space-based telescopes in order to explore the universe, right from your desktop.

Choose from among several guided tours narrated by experts. Controls allow you to pause the tour, explore on your own, and rejoin the tour where you left off. You can even choose which telescope to look through, including the Hubble Space Telescope, the Chandra X-Ray Observatory Center, the Spitzer Space Telescope, or others. View the locations of planets in the night sky—in the past, present, or future.

To begin your journeys you must download the WWT software, which can take up to an hour. For a list of system requirements and to get started, go to **http://worldwidetelescope.org**.

MATH + JUSTICE = SUCCESS

Looking for a way to help math relate to your students' lives? Radical Math is an online resource for educators interested in integrating issues of social and economic justice into their math classes and curriculum. As mathematical literacy has long been a gatekeeper to higher learning experiences, and thus, higher earning potential, the site's founder—a former public high school math teacher—believes that math literacy is a civil right. He hopes to inspire students to ask: "What are the problems my community faces, and how can I use math to understand and help solve them?" For more information, go to **www.radicalmath.org**.

BOOKMARK THIS SITE

Do you love bookmarks? Mirage Bookmark maintains a Web site that houses, in addition to its retail shop, an online museum dedicated to this portable but potent art form. Along with a brief history of the bookmark, an exhibit called "The Art of the Bookmark" offers dozens of images to peruse, from old parchment artifacts to contemporary materials and design. Lots of related links will keep bibliophiles meandering through the Internet in a happy daze. Note that some bookmarks contain partially robed figures, so use judgment in introducing students to this site. Go to **http://miragebookmark.ch**.

HISTORY, HISTORY, AND MORE HISTORY

Best of History Web Sites is an award-winning portal containing annotated links to over 1,000 history Web sites, as well as links to hundreds of K–12 history lesson plans, teacher guides, Web quests, activities, games, quizzes, multimedia, and more. Content areas include pre- and ancient history, medieval, American, World War II, and current history; there's even a section for art history.

Dive in at **http://besthistorysites.net**.

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Regis Teacher Education Graduate
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New from NEA's Read Across America

HOLD ON TO YOUR HAT! IT'S A NEW SCHOOL YEAR AND NEA'S READ ACROSS AMERICA PROMISES TO KEEP YOU RICH IN READING RESOURCES ALL YEAR LONG. HERE'S HOW YOU START:

Order the 2008-09 NEA's Read Across America Resource Calendar, featuring new books, posters, and sticker sheet. But supplies are limited: go to **www.nea.org/readacross** to order your copy now. (The calendar will also be available for download online.)

Go to www.kidthing.com/nea each month for free teacher downloads that augment the calendar and keep it up-to-date.

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BOOKS BY NEA MEMBERS

BEHIND THE SCHOOL WALL: SECRETS REVEALED BY AN INSIDER

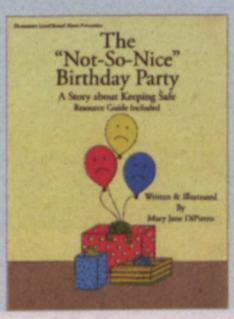
By Barbara Kiernan

Based on the author's 20 years as a school counselor, this book offers insights into the struggles that today's teens face, and how they succeed or fail by the quality of support they receive. Composite sketches of young people, parents, and teachers portray educational, environmental, and social issues affecting the health and well-being of youth and suggest strategies to nurture and empower them. 528 pp. $23.99 from Booksurge Publishing. Go to www.amazon.com.

THE 'NOT-SO-NICE' BIRTHDAY PARTY

By Mary Jane DiPietro

Wendy is excited about her birthday party, until Uncle Max arrives. He has been sexually abusing her, and she doesn't know what to do or who to tell. This storybook includes a resource guide that counselors, nurses, and other school staff will find useful if their students need intervention, help, or support. Ages 9–12. 32 pp. $22.49 from AuthorHouse. Go to www.authorhouse.com.



ACTIVE WORD PLAY: GAMES AND ACTIVITIES THAT BUILD VOCABULARY

By Jane Feber

Using an active-engagement approach, these games and activities encourage students to explore and aquire new vocabulary. Step-by-step instructions and illustrations allow students to make connections that help them understand and retain the words they learn. Grades 4+. 70 pp. $19.95 from Maupin House. To order, go to www.maupinhouse.com.

ALL PRETTY AND BRIGHT: STORIES OF COURAGE AND HOPE FOR THE TEACHING LIFE

By Karen Ferguson Tauber

In this, the author's first short story collection, she focuses on the lives of seemingly ordinary individuals—women, public school teachers—who confront extraordinary circumstances and face critical choices about the teaching life. Some will make the commitment to stay while others will surrender and move on, but they all speak to the experience of what it means to teach. 163 pp. $16.95 from Blueberry Press. Go to www.amazon.com.

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UM...YOU, OVER THERE!

Is that Megan, or Margaret? BY KATY KELLEY

RECENTLY, I READ AN article lauding a long-time teacher who remembers the name of every student she ever taught. How inspiring, I thought. How moving. How absolutely impossible!

I started teaching back when that Einstein kid still combed his hair. By a conservative estimate I have taught more than 13,800 students, and I assure you I do not remember all their names. In fact, each year I must forget previous names to clear brain-space for new ones. If Miss Jones can name her every student since Taft was president (1909–1913), why can't I name the 160 I taught last year?

Katy Kelley and a student whose name she'd like to remember.

Miss Jones begins to take shape in my imagination. She teaches in a one-room schoolhouse in Jonesville, where her students are her nephews-in-law and cousins once-removed. Miss Jones sees them week after week, in church and at the Piggly Wiggly and furtively buying beer at the liquor store in the next town. Of course she remembers their names.

> "Males delight in nicknames—Gonzo, Face, Pigman, Notso (last name Bright)..."

And Jonesvillians give their children sensible names, spelled and pronounced sensibly. If they wish a daughter to be called Michelle, they do not name her Michael. If they choose the name Bob, they don't embellish it with silent consonants and random squiggles, just to be different. (Literary note: the narrator of Moby Dick was christened W~bkob, hence his demand to be called Ishmael.)

Jonesville parents resist giving their children popular soap opera names like Brook, Ridge, and Cliff (less popular are Plateau, Gully, and Bog), and they eschew the trends that result in every third female infant being christened Tiffany. (The rest are named Tiphaknee.)

Miss Jones never faced a class containing Christine, Kristine, Krista, Chrystal, Krystel, Christy, Crissee, Kristen, Kirsten, Kjersten, Christopher, and Kristofer, with everyone else named Chris, Kris, and Cris. Or Ckris. Just to be different.

I envy Miss Jones. She doesn't have to remember that Andrea is pronounced AN-dree-a in third period, AHN-dree-a in fifth, and Ahn-DRAY-a in sixth. An adolescent girl doesn't adopt an easygoing "to-may-to, to-mah-to" philosophy about her name. Or anything else. She is relentlessly driven to discover her true self, so she can transform it into whatever will most annoy her parents. And each new persona requires a new name. (I've learned to dread Elizabeths. It takes an entire semester to cycle through all the permutations of those nine letters. Monday's Liz is Tuesday's Beth is Wednesday's Elle, spelled "L.")

Pop quiz: How do you pronounce Ciara? If your answer rhymes with a western mountain range, or a bejeweled head ornament sometimes worn by Queen Elizabeth II (who prefers to be called L, by the way), you've just incurred the wrath of CAR-uh. Or CARE-uh. How about Shayan? If your answer is preceded by "Come back" in a well-known western movie, wrong again. It's Cheyenne.

Boys are more easygoing about their names. This may be because the average young male hears only 0.8 percent of what you say. You could call him Shadrach, Meshach, or Abednego and he wouldn't notice.

However, males delight in nicknames—Gonzo, Face, Pigman, Notso (last name Bright)—that teachers hesitate to utter for fear the self-esteem police will beat down the door. Or Tumbleweed, which seems innocuous until you learn that it refers to the bearer using Mom's Kenmore to dry his stash of a controlled substance.

So what does the future hold? Will the pendulum swing back, once again bringing class lists that follow the rules of phonetics and common sense? Of course not! Even now infants are being named by parents who communicate solely by texting. Prepare for the likes of JUS10 Timberlake and K8 Hepburn.

1 thingz 4 sure; it'll be different.

Katy Kelley teaches in Tucson, Arizona.

PHOTO: JEFF TOPPING

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